

SERMONS

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS,

VIZ.

Men have natural Abilities of
Knowing GOD.

The Wisdom of GOD in the Re-
demption of Man.

Of the Hopes of Happiness through
Christ.

Of the Fundamentals of Chris-
tianity.

Christians ought to endeavour to
attain Perfection.

The Reward of Justice.

The Abounding of Iniquity the
Cause of its abounding more.

The Wickedness of Christians no
Argument against Christianity.

GOD will reward all Men ac-
cording to their Deserts.

Of the Deceitfulness of Sin.

That true Christians are free from
all Habits of Sin.

That Mens True Happiness con-
sists in the Favour of GOD.

That Godliness generally makes
Men happy in this Life.

Perseverance in Religion the only
Title to the Reward of it.

Different Degrees of Sinners diffe-
rently to be treated.

Of the Duty of Prayer.

320

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Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection;

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S E R M O N

S E R M O N I.

Men have natural Abilities of
Knowing GOD.

I COR. I. 21.

*For after that, in the Wisdom of God, the
World by Wisdom knew not God, it
pleased God by the foolishness of Preach-
ing to save them that believe.*



BESIDES That General vici- SERM. I.
ousness and corruption of
mankind, which made them
averse to entertain a Doctrine
of such Purity and Holiness,
as the Gospel is; there were moreover in
VOL. IX. B particular

S E R M. *particular* two very great Prejudices, which
 I. the first preachers of Christianity had to
 encounter with at once, from two different
 sorts of Adversaries, the *Jews* and *Gentiles*: Whereof the one pretended,
 that this new Doctrine was set up in opposition
 to the Authority of God; the other alledged,
 that it was repugnant to the Reason and Understanding,
 of the wisest and most learned *Men*. Objections
 indeed, either of which, if they had been well
 grounded, would have been of sufficient weight
 to justify the opposition made to our Lord and
 his Apostles. But the weakness and unreasonableness
 of *both* these Prejudices, was soon made apparent.
 For our Saviour, by doing such works, as the
 Ruler of the *Jews* confessed *no man could do except
 God were with him*; abundantly proved himself to
 be a Teacher sent by commission from God: And,
 on the other hand, as to the *Reason* of considerate
 and impartial *men*; Wisdom has been always,
 and always will be *justified of all her Children*.
 The *Jews* indeed were sure they were the
 posterity of *Abraham*, to whom

God

God had made such extensive and such S E R M.
lasting Promises; and therefore they could I.
not easily believe, that God would *cast*
away his people: They were certain the
Religion they professed, was a Law of
God's own delivering; and therefore they
had reason to expect, that whoever at-
tempted to *change the Customs which Mo-*
ses had taught them, should, in order to
remove those Customs, produce an Au-
thority equal to that which established
them. The *Gentiles* could not make any
plea altogether so reasonable; because they
had not among them any particular form
of Religion, which could with any tole-
rable colour pretend to be of Divine In-
stitution: Yet thus much they had reason
to expect in general, that if a few mean
persons, such as the Apostles were, under-
took to establish a new Religion, in op-
position to the Wisdom of all the learn-
edest and all the most celebrated Philo-
sophers that flourished in their several
Sects; these Preachers of the Gospel
should at least prove their Doctrine to

S E R M. be agreeable to *Reason*, as a necessary Re-
 I. quisite to prepare men to consider the
 evidences, of its being immediately sent
 from God. Accordingly we find in Scrip-
 ture abundant care taken, to satisfy *Both*
 these sorts of persons; and indeed all other
 Opposers whatsoever, excepting those on-
 ly who set themselves against the Gospel
 merely out of obstinacy, and *love Dark-
 ness rather than Light, because their deeds
 are evil.*

To the Objections of the *Jews*, we
 find our Saviour replying, that he *came
 not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it*;
 that the *moral* Law was not changed by
 him, but explained and enforced; that
 the *typical* Law was in its whole design,
 nothing but a real Prophecy of *him*; and
 therefore by ceasing at his appearance,
 was not destroyed, but compleatly accom-
 plished in its original and full intention;
 that accordingly all the *Prophets* in the
 Old Testament, pointed at him; that *A-
 braham* their Father *rejoyced to foresee his
 day*; and that *Moses* himself expressly spoke

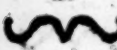
of *Knowing* GOD.

5

of him, as the great Prophet to whom S E R M.
they ought to hearken. Besides all which, I:
he produced the Testimony of greater *Miracles* for the proof of his Divine Authority, than those by which the *Law* itself had been at first established.

ON the other hand, against the Objections of the *Gentiles*, we find the Apostles not only urging the Testimony of their Miraculous *Works*, but proving also the credibility and *reasonableness*, the excellency and *wisdom* of their *Doctrine* itself; and that Wisdom is in all respects justified of all her Children. That the God, whom they now declared in the Gospel, was the same God, whom the Heathen World before ignorantly disputed about, and ignorantly worshipped in part, under the title of the *Unknown God*; even the same God who made the *World*, and all things therein; who giveth to all, *life*, and *breath*, and all things; who is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being; who causeth his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain

S E R M. *on the just and on the unjust; who in the*

I.  darkest and most ignorant Ages of the World, never left himself wholly without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness; The Apostles further alledged, that it was very much contrary to Reason, to think that the Godhead was like unto gold or silver or stone graven by art and man's device; and extremely dishonourable and absurd, to change the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things: That it was further very reasonable to believe, that as there is One God, so there should be One Mediator between God and Man, who might ascertain to us the Pardon of Sin and the Acceptableness of Repentance; That That Immortality, about which the best of the Heathen-Philosophers disputed with great uncertainty and doubtfulness, was a Truth now clearly brought to light by the Gospel: Lastly, That if they acknowledged it highly agreeable to natural Reason

of Knowing GOD.

7

Reason to believe, that God would judge S E R M.
the World; *why should it be thought a* I
thing incredible with them, that, in order
to That Judgment, God should raise the
dead? By these and the like Arguments
did the Apostles prove both against Jews
and Gentiles, that That Revelation of the
Gospel, which the One thought so con-
trary to their Law received from God, and
the other judged so repugnant to the Wis-
dom and Reason of Men; was really to
Both of them, when impartially consider-
ed and examined, an undeniable Manifest-
tation both of the Power and Wisdom of
God. *The Jews require a Sign, and the*
Greeks seek after Wisdom; But we preach
Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stum-
bling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;
But unto them which are called, both Jews
and Greeks, Christ the Power of God and
the Wisdom of God; As the Argument is
excellently summed up by St. Paul, in the
words immediately following the Text.

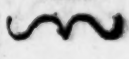
THE words of the Text itself, relate
only to One of these Objections, against
Christianity; namely, That which was

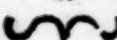
S E R M. usually urged by the *Gentile Unbelievers*,
 I. that the Doctrine of the Gospel, was not
 agreeable to their *Reason* and *Philosophy*,
 to the *Wisdom* and *Knowledge* of those
 Times. To which the Apostle replies;
 by showing that the Religion of Christ,
 which they esteemed as *Foolishness*, was
 really on the contrary infinitely *Wiser* and
more Excellent, than any Philosophy in
 the World; And that this would appear,
 by comparing together their respective
Effects: For after that, in the *Wisdom* of
 God, the World (saith he) by *Wisdom* knew
 not God, it pleased God by the *Foolishness*
 of *Preaching* to save them that believe.

IN the *Wisdom* of God; that is to say,
 by the wise direction of that all-seeing
 and over-ruling Providence, which brings
 Light out of Darkness, and Order out of
 the greatest Confusion; By the direction
 of That Providence, which sees at one
 view through all the Periods of Time,
 and, in the various changes and different
 Ages of the World, so disposes and con-
 ducts an infinite diversity of Events, as
 that they all tend uniformly towards the
 accom-

accomplishing One Great and regular De-^{S E R M.}
 sign of the Supreme Creator and Lord of ^{I.}
 all things; even in the same manner as
 the loose materials of a Building, which
 seem singly to have no similitude, no apt-
 ness or proportion to each other, yet
 when put together in their proper places
 by the direction of a skilful Architect, u-
 nite all into one regular and proportionate
 Structure: Through the direction, says
 the Apostle, of This *All-Wise* and un-
 erring Providence, it came to pass, that
 when *the World by Wisdom knew not God*;
 by *Wisdom*, that is, by their *own* Wisdom,
 the Wisdom of *Men*, the Reasoning and
 Philosophy of the Age, the Method and
 Art of Disputing, which was then look-
 ed upon as the greatest Knowledge, and
 which, among the Vulgar, gave men the
 highest reputation for Wisdom; When
 by *This* Wisdom they *knew not God*; The
 meaning is, not, *were wholly ignorant of*
him, (for that was impossible;) but, when
 they knew him not *aright*; when, (as
 the Apostle elsewhere expresses it,) not-
 withstanding *they knew God*, yet *they glo-*
rified

SERMON. *rified him not as God, neither were thank-
 I. ful, but became vain in their imaginations,
 and their foolish heart was darkened: And
 they changed the glory of the incorruptible
 God into an image made like to corrupt-
 tible man, and to birds, and four-footed
 beasts, and creeping things: (For so we
 find in Scripture-phrase, that not know-
 ing God, signified, not honouring him ac-
 cording to our knowledge; He that loveth
 not, knoweth not God; 1 Joh. iv. 8. The
 Gentiles which know not God; 1 Th. iv. 5.
 And, our Lord shall come in flaming fire,
 taking vengeance on them that know not
 God, and obey not the Gospel; 2 Th. i. 8.
 And thus all wicked men, Jews and Chri-
 stians, as well as professed Infidels, are by
 a like expression frequently in Scripture
 stiled Unbelievers, upon account of their
 Disobedience, Heb. ili. 12, 19; because
 All Men, as they are reasonable Creatures,
 are presumed always to act according to
 what they believe:)* When therefore, I
 say, this was the state of Mankind; and
 it appeared that by all their Philosophy
 and great pretences to *Wisdom*, they did
 by

by no means attain to a right and practical SERM.
 Knowledge of God; when by *this Wis-* L
dom the World knew not God; *then* did 
 it *please* God by the *Foolishness of Preach-*
ing, that is, by a plain and unartificial
 Doctrine, by the Teaching and Exhorta-
 tions of pious and unlearned Men, by a
 Simplicity of Instruction, (which, to men
 brought up in the Art of Disputing,
 seemed to be Weakness and Foolishness,
 to be a Method which could by no means
 have any considerable Effect in the World;)
 by *This Foolishness of Preaching* did it *please*
 God to *save*, that is, to *deliver*, from the
 Darkness of Ignorance and endless dis-
 putes, from the slavery of Vice and most
 detestable Idolatry, from the Terrours of
 Conscience, from the Fears of Death, and
 from the final Wrath of God, from these
 Evils did it please God to save, *them that*
Believe; The meaning is, not the weak
 and credulous, men easy to be imposed
 upon and deceived, as Unbelievers pro-
 fanely described them; but persons of
 meek and humble Dispositions, teachable
 and willing to be instructed, free from
 obstinate

S E R M. obstinate and unreasonable prejudices, capable of being reformed, and of being
 I.  persuaded to forsake their Vices: In a word, such persons as the Scripture describes, when it tells us that *if any man will do his Will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God*; St Joh. vii. 17: That the Meek will God guide in judgment, and such as are gentle, them will he teach his way; Ps. xxv. 9: That the Secret of the Lord, is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant; ver. 14: That Mysteries are revealed unto the Meek; Eccclus. iii. 19: That the good ground which brought forth much fruit, are they which in an honest and good heart receive the Word of God, and keep it. These are *they that Believe*; These are the persons who are *saved*, by the Foolishness of Preaching; they are the same, whom our Saviour speaks of in his Prayer, St Luk. x. 21; *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes*; Even so, Father; for so it seemed
 good

good in thy fight. Words very near equivalent to the Expressions in the Text: SERM. I.

After that, in the Wisdom of God, the world by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that Believe: After it appeared that the World by their *Humane* Wisdom, in the Ages of Ignorance and Corruption, could not attain to a right Knowledge of God, and of the manner of worshipping him acceptably; it pleased the *Divine* Wisdom of Providence, by a method which They accounted Foolishness, but which by the Effects appeared to be infinitely Wiser than all the Philosophy in the World, it pleased God by *This* method to bring to Salvation such as were sincerely disposed to embrace and Practise the Truth.

FROM the words thus explained, there naturally arise the following Propositions.

1st; THAT God originally indued men with natural Capacities, with Faculties, and Abilities of Knowing him; in the Use of which Faculties after a right manner,
and

SERM. and before they had corrupted themselves,
 I. consisted the true Wisdom and Excellency
 of Man. *The World, by Wisdom.*

2dly; THAT, notwithstanding this original Fitness of mens natural Faculties and Capacities to search after and apprehend God; yet, in Fact, through a great and general Corruption, they did not attain to a right Knowledge of him in any considerable Degree. *The World by Wisdom knew not God.*

3dly; THAT, when the Insufficiency of *Humane* Wisdom had thus abundantly appeared; it pleased the *Divine* Wisdom to manifest himself clearly to the World by *another* Method, which *they* accounted Foolishness, even by the Preaching of the Gospel of Christ. *It pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching, to bring men to Salvation.*

4thly; THAT the Persons, for whose Conviction this manifestation of God by the Gospel was peculiarly designed and adapted, were not the cunning and contentious Disputers of the World, but meek and humble and well-disposed Persons.

sons. It was to save them, that be-
lieve. S E R M.
I.

Lastly; THAT in this whole Dispensation of Providence, which the Unbelieving World looked upon as Foolishness, the infinite Wisdom of God has in reality most illustriously appeared. After that, in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.

I. *First; THE Text supposes, that God did originally endue men with natural Capacities, with Faculties, and Abilities of Knowing him; in the Use of which Faculties after a right manner, and before they had corrupted themselves, consisted the true Wisdom and Excellency of Man. This is implied here in the Use of the Term, Wisdom; The World by Wisdom: And in the supposition upon which the same Apostle St Paul always argues in other parallel places of his Epistles; namely, that the Heathen World were very blameable and justly condemned, for not attaining, by the use of their natural*
Faculties,

SERMON Faculties, to a right Knowledge of God.

I For this cause, says he, God gave them up unto vile affections; Rom. i. 26: And they received in themselves that recompence of their errour which was meet; ver. 27: And God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ver. 28: And the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all their ungodliness and unrighteousness; ver. 18. Why? For this reason, Because they held the Truth in unrighteousness; ver. 18: Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; ver. 21: Because they changed the Truth of God into a Lye; ver. 25: And because they did not like to retain God in their Knowledge; ver. 28. All which Reproofs necessarily supposed, that, by the use of their natural Faculties, they might and ought to have known God: And indeed this is affirmed in expresse words by the Apostle, ver. 19; For that which may be known of God, is manifest in them; for God has shewed it unto them ----- So that they are without excuse. And the same Apostle, *Acts* xvii. 22; reproving

reproving the *Athenians* for being in all S E R M.
things too superstitious and ignorant of L.
 God, does it upon this Argument, ver. 27;
 that God is not far from every one of us, for
 in him we live, and move, and have our Be-
 ing. The *Works* of God, are manifest to

all men; and God has endued all men
 with Reason and Understanding, from the
 Contemplation of those Works, to disco-
 ver the Wisdom and Glory of their Ma-
 ker. The Excellency of the Mind of
 Man *itself*, when it looks no further than
 upon its *own* nature, and considers only
 its *own* inward Capacities and wonderful
 Faculties; sufficiently discovers how great
 must be the Author of so admirable a
 Workmanship, and what exalted Notions
 we ought to frame of Him who made so
 noble a Being. Forasmuch as we are the
 offspring of God, argues St Paul in his dis-
 course to the *Athenians*, now-mentioned,
 Acts xvii. 29; we ought not to think that
 the Godhead, the Author and Creator of
 a Being endued with such excellent Facul-
 ties as the Mind of Man is, should himself
 be like unto things of a still far inferior

S E R M. nature, like unto gold, or silver, or stone
 I. graven by art and man's device. A rational
 Creature, that is *itself* endued with Understanding, Knowledge, and Will; cannot without extreme degeneracy and unworthiness, imagine its Creator to be like any of the Creatures, which are of a nature far inferiour even to the Mind itself which thus contemplates; or that irrational Creatures, much less things inanimate, and the work of *Mens* hands, should bear any resemblance to, or be of any use as Means of Worship, through which to convey Honour to the Maker of all Things. There is no other Image of God in this lower World, but *the Mind* of Man, a Mind endued with Reason and true Virtue; And the only acceptable Worship, that Reason without the assistance of Revelation directs, is the Subjection of our Minds and Wills to him, by a Life of Virtue, Righteousness, and Truth. This is the inference St *Paul* draws from the consideration of the Nobleness of *our own Nature*; considering ourselves as the *Offspring of God*, partakers of Reason, of Under-

Understanding, and Will; in reproof of SERM.
the *Athenians* Superstition. But then fur-
ther, if we extend our Contemplation ^{I.}
beyond ourselves, to a view of the infinite
and incomprehensible Variety, the exqui-
site Beauty, the wonderful Proportion
and Harmony of the Works of God in
the World; it will be still more evident,
that God has never *left himself* wholly
without Witness, but has always afforded
men sufficient means and opportunities of
knowing him. For the *Eye* is not better
fitted to discern the *Sun* which enlightens
all things, and to distinguish the Diversity
of Colours which adorn the Face of the
Universe; than the *Mind* and Reason of
Man is qualified to apprehend God by his
Works, and through this noble Fabrick
of the material World to discern the Glo-
ry of its Great Creator: Nor are the ex-
ternal objects of Sense, more duly fitted
and adapted to make suitable impressions
upon their proper Organs; than the Works
of God in the World, are to excite in our
Minds just and worthy Notions of the
Maker and Disposer of all things. *The*

SERM. *invisible things of Him from the Creation*
 I. *of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; So that they, who are ignorant of him, are without excuse; Rom. i. 20. And this is the true Notion of what we usually call Universal Consent, concerning the Being of God; Not that every individual person in the World actually attends to this Truth; (for This they do not, even in the most obvious and plainest things in nature;) but the meaning is, that every man in the use of his Reason and natural Faculties, must needs be able to discern the Evidences of the Being of God; that no man can miss this great and plain Truth, but by such unreasonable prejudices or very gross neglect, as is capable of no excuse; and that in all times and in all places, under all circumstances of education, reasoning and considering men have unanimously agreed in it. And this may suffice for proof and explication of the First Proposition; viz. That God originally indued men with natural Capacities, with*
Faculties,

Faculties, and Abilities of *Knowing* him; S E R M.
 in the Use of which Faculties after a right I
 manner, and before they had corrupted
 themselves, consisted the true Wisdom and
 Excellency of Man. *The World, by Wis-*
dom.

I should now have proceeded in the
Second place to show, that notwithstanding
 this original Fitness of mens natural
 Faculties and Capacities to search after
 and apprehend God; yet, in fact, thro'
 a great and general Corruption, Men,
 without the Assistance of Revelation, did
 not attain to a right Knowledge of him
 in any considerable degree. *The World by*
Wisdom knew not God. But the time not
 permitting me to enter upon this, I shall
 only draw *One Inference* from what has
 been said, and so conclude.

IF therefore, (as has been shown,) God
 has originally endued men with such na-
 tural Capacities, with such Faculties, and
 Abilities of knowing him, that even in
 the *Heathen World* itself, where they had
 no immediate Revelation from God, yet
 those who were ignorant of him, *St Paul*
 declares

22 *Men have natural Abilities, &c.*

SERM. declares to be without excuse; how much
I. more in a Christian Country; where, besides
the Use of our natural Reason, we enjoy
also the Benefit of the Gospel, and the
Word of God is constantly read and
preached: How much more (I say) a-
mong *Us*, must men be utterly inexcusa-
ble, of how mean Capacities soever they
may be, if they continue ignorant of God,
and of their Duty to him?



SERMON



S E R M O N II.

The Wisdom of GOD in the Redemption of Man.



I C O R. i. 21.

For after that, in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.



THE Apostle in the beginning S E R M. II.
of this Chapter reproves the
Corinthians for their Contentions and Divisions among themselves, which were occasioned by their liking some one Teacher
C 4 and

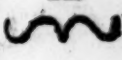
S E R M. and some another ; *One of you saith, I am*
 II. *of Paul ; another, I am of Apollos, and I*
 of *Cephas, and I of Christ.* To show the
 unreasonableness of this, he intimates,
 (what he more largely insists upon in the
 iiii^d Chapter,) that the several Apostles
 and Teachers sent by Christ, were *but Mi-*
nisters only, by whom they believed, even
as the Lord gave to every man ; that is,
 according to the divers gifts and abilities,
 which the Spirit of God distributed to
 every man severally as he pleased, for the
 promoting of the Gospel ; and that there-
 fore *neither was he that planted, any thing,*
neither he that watered, but God that gave
the increase ; his meaning is, neither was
 the Wisdom or Ability of one particular
 Teacher, or of another, of any conside-
 rable importance, but the Blessing of God
 only, which made the Preaching of them
 All effectual to Mens Conversion and Sal-
 vation. The Apostle, I say, having inti-
 mated thus much concerning the several
 Methods of Preaching the Gospel, and
 the several Gifts and Abilities of different
 Apostles ; proceeds, ver. 17, to declare
 concern-

concerning *himself* in particular, and for *him*.
his own Justification, that he preached, II.
not with Wisdom of Words, least the Cross
of Christ should be made of none effect;
that is, he did not make any affectation of
human Learning or Eloquence, least the
Gospel should seem, like the different
Sects and Doctrines of Philosophy, to de-
pend upon nice disputes and upon the
artful representations of eloquent Speech;
whereas, on the contrary, it was founded
on Truth of Matter of Fact, and on the
Evidence of undeniable Miracles; which
Sort of Proof does not owe its advantage
to the Descriptions of Oratory, but to the
Seriousness and Plainness, to the Credibi-
lity and Integrity of those who Attest it.
This he expresses more fully, ch. ii. ver. 4;
My Speech and my Preaching was not with
enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but in
Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power;
That your Faith should not stand in the
Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God.
The Reason why preaching with the enti-
cing Words of Man's Wisdom, would have
made the Cross of Christ of none effect; he
adds,

S E R M. adds, ver. 18, of the 1st chapter ; *For the*

II.

Preaching of the Cross is to them that perish, foolishness ; but unto us which are saved, it is the Power of God ; The meaning is ; the Doctrine of the Cross is a doctrine of such a Nature, as could not recommend itself by humane eloquence to the imaginations of vicious and vain Disputants, such as were most of the heathen Philosophers ; but to them *which are saved*, to serious and well-disposed Persons, who embrace Truth where-ever they find Evidence of it, and who are more pleased with what improves their minds, than with the vain Eloquence of the Heathen Oratory ; to *such* persons, the Gospel in its greatest Plainness and original Simplicity, is the *Power of God* ; The *Power of God*, not to amuse mens Understandings with needless Speculations, but to convert their Wills to Righteousness and true Holiness ; *to open their eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of Sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that*

that is in Christ. In bringing about Mens SERMON.
Salvation by such a Method as this, II
the Wisdom of God, says the Apostle, 
appeared infinitely superiour to all the
Methods of humane Wisdom: ver. 19;
For it is written, I will destroy the Wis-
dom of the Wise, and will bring to nothing
the Understanding of the prudent. Where
is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where
is the Disputer of this World? Hath not
God made foolish the Wisdom of this World?
And then he adds in the Words of the
Text; *For after that, in the Wisdom of*
God, the World by Wisdom knew not God,
it pleased God by the foolishness of Preach-
ing to save them that believe.

IN the Words I observed the follow-
ing Propositions to be contained.

1st; THAT God originally indued men
with natural Capacities, with Faculties,
and Abilities of Knowing him; in the
Use of which Faculties after a right
manner, and before they had corrupted
themselves, consisted the true Wisdom and
Excellency of Man. *The World, by Wis-*
dom.

2^{dly};

S E R M. 2dly; THAT, notwithstanding this original Fitness of mens natural Faculties and Capacities to search after and apprehend God; yet, in Fact, through a great and general Corruption, they did not attain to a right Knowledge of him in any considerable Degree. *The World by Wisdom knew not God.*

3dly; THAT, when the Insufficiency of Human Wisdom had thus abundantly appeared; it pleased the Divine Wisdom to manifest himself clearly to the World by another Method, which they accounted Foolishness, even by the Preaching of the Gospel of Christ, *It pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching, to bring men to Salvation.*

4thly; THAT the Persons, for whose Conviction this manifestation of God by the Gospel was peculiarly designed and adapted, were not the cunning and contentious Disputers of the World, but meek and humble and well-disposed Persons. *It was to save them that believe.*

Lastly; THAT in this whole Dispensation of Providence, which the Unbelieving

ving World looked upon as *Foolishness*, the S E R M. infinite *Wisdom* of God has in reality II. most illustriously appeared. *After that in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.*

THE first of these Propositions I have already considered in a foregoing Discourse; I proceed now in the

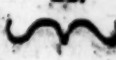
II. *Second place to show that notwithstanding this original Fitness of mens natural Faculties and Capacities to search after and apprehend God; yet, in Fact, through a great and general Corruption, men, without the Assistance of Revelation, did not attain to a right Knowledge of him in any considerable degree. The World by Wisdom knew not God: They knew him not, as they might and ought to have known him: They knew him not, because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge: They glorified him not as God, but ran into Idolatry and vicious practices; and this further corrupted their Notions, so that they became more and more*

SERM. *more vain in their imaginations, and their*

II. *foolish heart was darkned.* For as the *Eye*, when put out, discerns the Light no more, than if it had never been at all framed to be an Organ of Seeing; So when the Understanding is darkned by vain Imaginations, the Will biaſſed by evil Inclinations, and the Affections corrupted by vicious Practices; what wonder is it if men in a manner cease to know *him*, who is the Author of all Knowledge and Understanding? For 'tis God that *teaches man knowledge*, and *the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him Understanding*; Ps. xciv. 10, and Job xxxii. 8. The Philosophers themselves, who should have corrected the Errors of the Vulgar; even They, in those very Enquiries wherein they *professed themselves to be most wise, they became Fools*; Rom. i. 22. Some Sects of them argued themselves out of the Belief of the very Being of God, and ridiculously attempted to give an Account of the original formation of the World, by the accidental concurrence of senseless Atoms: Others, professing in words to believe

in the Redemption of Man.

31

lieve his Being, yet by denying his Pro-^{S E R M.}
vidence and Government of the World,^{II.}
in reality destroyed their own Supposition. 
Some by ascribing all things to Chance,
others to absolute Fatality, equally sub-
verted all true Notions of Religion; and
made the Doctrine of the Resurrection of
the Dead and of a Future Judgment,
needless and impossible. Of these we
read, *Acts xvii. 18*; *Then certain Philo-*
sophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoicks
encountred Paul; and some said, What will
this babler say? Other some, he seemeth to
be a setter-forth of strange Gods; because
he preached unto them Jesus and the Re-
surrection: And to some of these pro-
bably St Paul alludes, when he warns the
Colossians, ch. ii. ver. 4, 8; *Beware, lest any*
man should beguile you with enticing words,
and spoil you through philosophy and vain
deceit, after the tradition of men, after
the rudiments of the World, and not after
Christ. Further; Most of them allowed
and encouraged the Worship of such
false Gods, as the Poets had first feigned
like the most wicked men; and the na-
tural

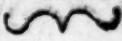
SERM. tural consequence of this, as well as the
 H. just judgment of God upon them, was,
 ~~~~~ that they should be given up to work all  
 uncleanness and unrighteousness with greed-  
 iness; as *St Paul* largely explains in the  
 1st chapter of his epistle to the *Romans*.  
 Some professed open Immorality, asserting  
 sensual pleasure to be the chiefest Good;  
 whose evil *Communications* could not but  
 of necessity corrupt good manners; *Let us*  
*eat and drink, for to morrow we die*; 1 Cor.  
 xv. 33. Others by subtle distinctions pa-  
 tronized particular Vices, to which them-  
 selves were most addicted; To whose doc-  
 trines perhaps *St Paul* had regard, when  
 he so often repeats that caution, and  
 always upon the same Occasion; *Be not*  
*deceived*; *Let no man deceive himself*; *Let*  
*no man deceive you with vain words*;  
*Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor a-*  
*dulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of*  
*themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor*  
*covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor*  
*extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of*  
*God*. The Better Sort of them, who were  
 the most celebrated, and with the great-  
 est

est Reason ; discoursed yet with much Uncertainty and Doubtfulness, concerning things of the highest and most universal importance, the Providence of God in governing the World, the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future Judgment: And, excepting two or three very eminent Persons, who appeared singly in so many different Ages of the World, as *Lights* raised up by Providence to shine in a dark place ; excepting These, I say, the generality of the Philosophers Disputes even upon these most important Subjects, were managed in a Way of Pride and Vain-glory, Subtlety and Strife ; ending in Nothing but Words and Empty Contention ; and having little or no Influence and Authority, to amend and reform the manners of a degenerate and corrupt World: So that, upon the whole, it is no wonder, that, *by This Wisdom the World knew not God.*

III. *Thirdly* ; WHEN the Insufficiency of *Human Wisdom* had thus abundantly appeared ; it pleased the *Divine Wisdom* to manifest himself clearly to the World by another Method, which *They*



S E R M. accounted Foolishness, even by the Preaching of the Gospel of Christ. *It pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to bring men to Salvation.* Those great Ends, which the Wisdom of the World was so far from being able to accomplish, that on the contrary, under the specious title of Wisdom, it appeared in reality to be little better than mere Folly, and altogether ineffectual; Those great Ends, (I say,) of delivering mankind from Superstition and Ignorance, from Sin and Misery, has the Wisdom of God effectually brought about by the Preaching of That Doctrine, which the Wisdom of the World esteemed as Foolishness; *Foolishness* they thought it to be, in respect of the *Doctrine* itself; which they looked upon as incredible; that God should send his Son into the World, to die for the Sins of Men, to rise again for their Justification, and to be himself their Judge at the general Resurrection: *Foolishness* in respect of the *Persons*, by whom it was taught; a crucified Master, mean and unlearned Disciples; *Foolishness* in respect of the *Manner* of its

its propagation; with all Plainness and SERM.  
Simplicity, without eloquence, without II.  
oratory, without any of the enticing 

words of man's Wisdom: Yet in event, which is the true Justification of Wisdom; what the pretended Wisdom of Men was infinitely insufficient to effect, *This Foolishness* of Preaching actually has accomplished: By *This* has been dispelled that universal *Ignorance and Superstition* which overspread the whole World; and all men Now *do* or easily *may* come to the Knowledge and Worship of the One only true God of Nature, and Lord of the whole Universe. By *This*, innumerable Persons of all Capacities, have been prevailed upon and enabled to live in the Practice of all *Purity, Holiness and Righteousness*, far beyond the Examples of the most Celebrated Philosophers: By *This* have been discovered the only true means of finding Comfort against the *Fear of Death*, against the Evil of past Sins, against the *Terrours of Conscience* and *Apprehensions of the righteous Judgment of God*: Lastly, By *This* only, has been made clear and

S E R M. manifest *Immortality* and *Eternal Life*,  
 II. the Happiness of Heaven and the certain  
 means of attaining it. By *This Foolish-*  
*ness of Preaching* has it pleased God to  
 bring men to *Salvation*.

IV. *Fourthly*; HERE is an Account  
 of the *Persons*, for whose conviction this  
 Manifestation of God by the Gospel was  
 peculiarly designed and adapted; namely,  
 that they are, not the artful and conten-  
 tious Disputers of the World, but meek  
 and humble and well-disposed Persons; It  
 was to save them that Believe. *Them*  
*that Believe*; That is, such as embrace,  
 and are willing to obey the doctrine of  
 Christ; Persons *teachable and well-disposed*,  
 capable of Instruction, free from obsti-  
 nate and unreasonable prejudices, willing  
 and desirous to know and to obey the  
 Will of God; Persons either not engaged  
 in any vicious Habits, or at least capable  
 of being reformed, and reclaimed from  
 their Errours, upon due conviction. Such  
 Persons as the Scripture elsewhere de-  
 scribes to be *ordained to eternal Life*, Acts  
 xiii. 48; the word signifies properly, not  
*ordained*,

ordained, but prepared, disposed, or well-<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
 qualified to receive the doctrine of Christ's <sup>II</sup>  
 Kingdom. Such as our Saviour calls his   
*Sheep* that will bear his voice, St Joh. x.  
 27; The Meaning is, that, however they  
 may at present wander in errors, and  
 possibly in some instances of wickedness,  
 yet they are such as have in them a Root  
 or Principle of Meekness and good Dis-  
 position, by which they may some time  
 be recovered: Such, of whom he else-  
 where affirms that *his Father draws* them,  
 or else they could not come unto him, St  
 Joh. vi. 44; that is, they have a general  
 Disposition to *do the Will of God*, which  
 causes them to judge rightly of *Christ's*  
*particular doctrine*, and to perceive that  
*it is of God*: These are *they that believe*:  
 Persons of a Temper directly contrary to  
 that of the Pharisees; and others both  
*Jews and Gentiles*, the ground of whose  
 rejecting the Gospel, was not any want of  
 reasonable evidence, but this only, that  
*they loved Darkeness rather than Light*,  
*because their deeds were evil*, St Joh. iii.  
 19; and *believed not the Truth*, be-  
 cause they had pleasure in *unrighte-*  
 D 3 *ousness,*



SERM. *ousness*; 2 Theſſalonians ii. 12. This,  
 II. Phrase therefore, *They that believe*, does  
 not ſignify *the Credulous*, and men eaſy  
 to be impoſed upon; as the Profane  
 World were apt to upbraid them; (For,  
 on the contrary, we find in Scripture that  
 the *Bereans* were commended for ſearch-  
 ing *the Scriptures daily*, whether thoſe  
 things were ſo, before they believed the  
 Teſtimony even of the Apoſtles them-  
 ſelves, *Acts xvii. 11*; and our Saviour  
 himſelf was willing that St *Thomas's* doubt  
 ſhould be ſatisfied by no leſs an Evidence  
 than that of his own Senſes; *Job. xx.*  
*27*;) But, *to believe*, ſignifies to ſubmit to  
 reaſonable evidence; in oppoſition to  
 thoſe, who caſt God's words behind them  
 for no other reaſon, but becauſe *they hate*  
*to be reformed*. And *This* good Diſpoſi-  
 tion, as it naturally prepares men to re-  
 ceive the Truth in the Love of it, becauſe  
 it furniſhes them before-hand with righ-  
 ter Notions of Divine things, and cauſes  
 them to examine things and enquire af-  
 ter Truth with more impartiality; ſo it  
 is very juſt with God, and very agreeable  
 to the Method of Providence, that ſuch  
 Perſons

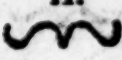
*Persons only* should have the full means of S E R M.  
Conviction allowed them, while the rest II.  
by their own negligence and wickedness   
are *blinded*.

V. *Fifthly* and *Lastly*; IN this Whole Dispensation of the Gospel, which the Unbelieving World looked upon as *Foolishness*, the infinite *Wisdom* of God has in reality most illustriously appeared. *After that, in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.* Wisdom consists, in accomplishing the most excellent *Designs*, and that in the best and properest *Manner*, but often by the most unlikely *Persons and Means*. Now in *each* of these respects, has the *Wisdom* of God most illustriously manifested itself in the Gospel. With regard to the *Manner* of its propagation, it was Wise and Fit that That Doctrine which was to be an Universal Law and Rule of Life to men of all capacities, and the condition of their Salvation; should be delivered with all plainness and Simplicity; *not with enticing words of man's*  
D 4 *Wisdom,*

SERM. *Wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*; 1 Cor. ii. 4 : For want of attending to which ; as the *Jews*, by establishing their own righteousness, the Traditions and Ceremonies of *Men*, attained not to the righteousness which is of God ; so the *Gentiles*, by adhering to their own Wisdom, the Philosophy of *humane* invention, fell short of that Wisdom, which was alone Divine. With regard to the *Meanness of the Persons*, and *Weakness of the Instruments* by which the Gospel was planted, the Wisdom of God appeared in *destroying the Wisdom of the Wise, and bringing to Nothing the Understanding of the Prudent* ; in *choosing the foolish things of the World to confound the Wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty* ; and *base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are* : That no flesh should glory in his presence ; 1 Cor. i. 19, 27. Lastly, in respect of the *Doctrine itself*, it was *Wise* to vindicate the Justice of God, and the Honour of his Laws and Government,

*in the Redemption of Man.*

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S E R M.  
II.  


Government, and to show his irreconcilable Hatred against Sin, by refusing to pardon it upon any easier Terms, than the Death of his Son: It was *Wise* to manifest at the same time, and in a consistent manner, his Mercy and Compassion towards Sinners, in so *loving the World*, as to send his *only Son* to die for that end, that in him, as St Paul expresses it, we might have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of Sins, according to the riches of his Grace, wherein he has abounded towards us in all Wisdom and Prudence; Eph. i. 7, 8. It was *Wise* to show the absolute Necessity of Repentance, and the Impossibility of Pardon without it; and at the same time to give effectual encouragement to such as are truly Penitent, and to instruct and assist them in the future performance of their Duty, by the greatest Example, by the plainest Precepts, by the clearest discovery of a Judgment to come, and by the powerful assistance of the Spirit of God. In these, and numberless other respects, which no Tongue can worthily describe,  
so



S E R M. so *Wise* is the Doctrine of the Gospel, that  
 II. thereby not only all Men may see, what  
 is the fellowship of the Mystery which from  
 the beginning of the world has been hid  
 in God, who created all things by Jesus  
 Christ; but even to the highest Angels  
 also, to the principalities and powers in  
 heavenly places, may be known by the  
 Church the manifold Wisdom of God;  
 Eph. iii. 9.

I SHALL but just mention an Inference or two from what has been said, and so conclude. And

1<sup>st</sup>; If that Knowledge of God, which by the Wisdom of the World could never be attained to, was by the Simplicity and plain Instruction of the Gospel, spread among men effectually and to Salvation; it follows, that, for the same reason, we ought always to adhere constantly to the Simplicity and Purity of the same doctrine, as delivered by Christ and his Apostles; laying as little stress as possible, upon any additional Doctrines or Explications of human Wisdom. In which regard, the Church of Rome has been

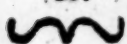
been principally, and *All* who in *Any* degree follow their example, have been proportionably, to blame, when, like the Pharisees of old, they make void the Commandments of God, by the doctrines and traditions of men. Directly contrary to the example of *St Paul*; who, notwithstanding his Apostolical authority, yet taught nothing but what he had learnt of *Christ*; and his *rejoycing* was this, the testimony of his Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, he had had his conversation in the World;

2 Cor. i. 12. And whose advice it is, 1 Cor. iii. 18; that if any man will be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may be Wise; That is; not, let him do any thing foolishly indeed; but by adhering to That, which weak men falsely esteem foolish, let him show himself to be really and truly wise.

2dly; If the Persons, for whose conviction the Gospel was peculiarly designed and adapted, were not the contentious Disputers of the World, but the meek and

S E R M.

II.



and humble and well-disposed; then, whoever pretends to be dissatisfied with the Evidences of the Gospel, and to expect further proof, is indispensably obliged before all things to attain this good disposition, to live up to the moral rules of Reason and natural Religion, and to show himself willing and desirous to obey the Will of God, in all cases wherein it is manifested unto him; and then he *shall* know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God. Which whilst All Libertines and Profane Persons openly neglect, they plainly fall under the condemnation of those, who *love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*; and whose Eyes therefore it is very just with God to shut that they should *not see*, and their Ears that they should *not hear*.

Lastly; If the Wisdom of God has already most illustriously appeared in the *first* Propagation of the Gospel, contrary to the expectation both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; then ought we in the practice of our plain Duty to depend upon the  
Wisdom

*in the Redemption of Man.*

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Wisdom of the same Providence to bring S E R M.  
about what *still* remains to be accom- II.  
plished, notwithstanding that *we* are not  
able perhaps to discern the Means of do-  
ing it. For as in the constitution of the  
*natural* World, the greatest number of  
Effects are produced by such Causes,  
whose Efficiency and manner of Opera-  
tion we cannot discover; so is it likewise  
in God's Government of the *moral* World  
by his Providence. The Scripture seems  
in many places to intimate, that there is  
still a Time to come, when the Gospel  
shall be more universally embraced and  
more uniformly practised, than it has ever  
yet been. To the fulfilling these Predic-  
tions, *we* can contribute nothing by any  
Designs of humane Wisdom, any other-  
wise than by continuing steadfast in the  
Practice of our plain Duty with Simpli-  
city and Sincerity of Heart, expecting  
with Patience, and depending upon the  
Wisdom of Providence to accomplish  
That Time, when *the Earth shall be filled  
with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the  
Waters cover the Sea.* And then we shall  
find



S E R M. find reason to cry out, as St Paul did  
 II. upon occasion of the manner of the *first*  
 w propagation of the Gospel, Rom. xi. 33;  
*O the depth of the Riches both of the  
 Knowledge and Wisdom of God; how un-  
 searchable are his judgments, and his ways  
 past finding out!*

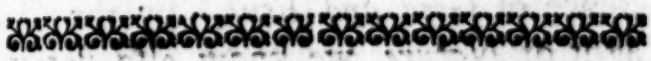


S E R M O N



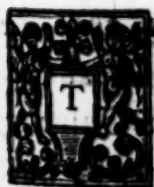
# SERMON III.

Of the Hopes of Happiness through  
*Christ.*



TIT. i. 2, 3.

*In hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the World began; But hath in due times manifested his Word through Preaching, which is committed unto Me, according to the Commandment of God our Saviour.*



THE whole Sentence, of which S E R M.  
these words are a part, runs I I L  
thus: *According to the Faith*  
*of God's elect, and the acknow-*  
*ledging of the Truth which is after Godli-*  
*ness;*

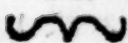
SERMON. *ness; In Hope of eternal Life, which God*  
 III. *that cannot lie, promised, &c.*

I. THE *First* thing therefore observable in the Text, is this Great and Fundamental Doctrine of Christian Religion; that, in the Revelation of the Gospel, God has given us an assured *Hope of eternal Life*, to be obtained by our *Acknowledging of the Truth which is after Godliness*. By the Light of *Nature*, we know certainly the essential, the eternal and unalterable Difference of *Good and Evil*. By the same Light of *Nature*, we know also demonstratively, (though the greatest part of the Heathen World, as St Paul observes, *did not like to retain this Knowledge*: But by the Light of *Nature*, I say, we may know demonstrably) the *Being* of a Supreme Author and Governour of the Universe: *For the invisible things of God from the creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made*; Rom. i. 20. That this Great Creator and Supreme Lord of the Universe, cannot but see and know things to be what they are; cannot but discern and judge, in the

the most perfect and unerring manner, Good S E R M.  
to be Good, and Evil to be Evil; cannot III.  
but approve the one, and be displeased  
with the other; and consequently cannot  
but at some time or other, and in some  
manner or other, in such way as to his  
infinite Wisdom shall seem fittest, mani-  
fest his Favour towards the one, and his  
Displeasure against the other; This also  
is as evident to *natural Reason*, as 'tis evi-  
dent, that *Fire* must give *Heat*, or that  
*Light* cannot be *Darkness*. For, the Ef-  
fects of the *necessary* operations of *inani-*  
*mate Causes*, are not more clearly con-  
nected with their respective *Natures*;  
than the *Effects* of the *Free* operation of  
*unerring Wisdom*, may be depended upon  
that they will be suitable to the *Nature* of  
*Wisdom* and *True Discernment*. In *gena-*  
*ral* therefore, that God will finally re-  
ward *Virtue* and punish *Vice*, stands upon  
the same foot of *Certainty* in *natural*  
*Reason*, as the Proof of the *Being* itself,  
and of the *Government* of God. But in  
*particular*, what *Degrees* or what *Dura-*  
*tion* of *Reward* or of *Punishment* God has



S E R M.  
III.



Rom. vi.  
23.

appointed to either, cannot be known without *Revelation*. And still much more, with regard to *Sinners*, upon *what Terms* God will accept *Repentance*, and from *what kind* of Offenders, and to *what Effects*, and *Purposes*, and *Degrees* of reconciliation he will accept it; cannot, with any *satisfactory certainty*, be discovered otherwise than by *Revelation*. In natural consequence of *Reason*, the *Wages of Sin is Death*; and *That*, attended with such Circumstances and such Duration of Punishment, as shall to the Righteous Judge of the whole Earth seem meet. But *eternal Life*, is the free *Gift of God*; in no consequence of Reason due *naturally*, as a Claim of *Right*, even to *innocent and sinless* Creatures. 'Tis God's *mere good pleasure* to give *Being* to any Creatures at all, and to *continue* them in *Being* for what Space of time he sees fit, in a State suitable to the Capacities of their several Natures, and in degrees of Happiness proportional to their Moral Improvements. But when they *have done all that is their Duty to do*, this gives them *no Right to Immor-*

## Happiness through Christ.

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Immortality, nor to any other State or S E R M.  
Degree of Happiness, than what they were III  
qualified for by the original capacity of  
their respective Natures. If Men had ne-  
ver Sinned, yet they would have had no  
Claim, in point of Justice, to be made  
equal to the Angels. Much less does the Luk. xxi  
Repentance of Sinners, put God under any 36.  
Obligation to bestow upon them a Bles-  
sed Immortality. The Hope of eternal Life  
therefore, both as to the Duration and as  
to the Greatness of the Happiness expres-  
sed in that Phrase, is, to Us in our pre-  
sent Circumstances, founded wholly upon  
the Promise of God in Christ. God has  
given unto Christ a Kingdom: And I,  
says our Lord to his Disciples, appoint unto  
You a Kingdom, as my Father hath ap-  
pointed unto Me; Luk. xxii. 29. The  
Means whereby, or the Conditions upon  
which, this eternal Life is to be obtained  
by us; are our embracing and professing  
the Doctrine of the Gospel, so as to bring  
forth the Fruits of it in righteous Prac-  
tice, in the course of a virtuous and re-  
ligious Life. This is what the Apostle

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here

SERM. here stiles the Faith of God's Elect, and  
 III. the acknowledging of the Truth which is  
 after Godliness.

'Tis called Truth, by way of eminence; as being, in point of Evidence and Reality, distinguished from the Lying Vanities of Idolatry and Superstition; and, in point of Plainness and Simplicity, from the uncertain and contentious Doctrines wherewith 'twas foreseen that it would in time be corrupted. And because men are extremely apt to value themselves upon a right Profession, and desirous, instead of governing their Passions and forsaking their Vices, to build up to themselves a Hope of Salvation upon Any other Terms, and to make an Exchange with God by Any Commutation; therefore the Scripture, in order to prevent this fatal and extensive Decent, has been exceedingly careful, always so to join together Truth and Godliness, as to show that no Profession of Religion whatsoever is of Any Advantage, any further than it influences men by its Obligations and by its Motives, to the practice of Righteousness and true Virtue. Hence in the Old Testament, the Commandments

God

## *Happiness through Christ.*

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God gave to the Jews, are called *The Law of Truth*,-----turning Many away from iniquity; Mal. ii. 6. And hence in the *New Testament*, the Gospel or Doctrine of Christ, is stiled, in the words before my Text, *the Truth which is after Godliness*. And, 1 Tim. vi. 3; *the Doctrine which is according to Godliness*. In 2 Th. ii. 13, 'tis *Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth*, through which God hath from the Beginning chosen us to Salvation. In Tit. ii. 11, 'tis *the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation*, by teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World. And for the same reason, mens rejecting the Gospel, is expressed, 2 Th. ii. 12, by their *not receiving the Love of the Truth*, and *not believing the Truth*, but *having pleasure in Unrighteousness*. And their not living answerably to the Knowledge they have of God's Will, is called *Holding the Truth in Unrighteousness*; and, *not obeying the Truth*, but *obeying Unrighteousness*; Rom. i. 18; and ii. 8. This therefore is

E 3

the



SERMON. the *First Particular* observable in my

III.

Text, namely, this Great and Fundamental Doctrine of Christian Religion; that, in the Revelation of the Gospel, God has given us an assured *Hope of eternal Life*, to be obtained by our *Acknowledging of the Truth which is after Godliness*.

II. 'TIS observable in the *Second* place, that this *Hope of eternal Life*, promised by God through Christ to All who truly repent, being founded entirely upon the gracious *forgiveness of Sin*, and being consequently a *Deliverance* of Sinners from the Wrath of God; is therefore in Scripture usually and very properly stiled *Salvation*. And that, upon This Account; as *Christ*, who was the Propitiation for our Sins, is, in a sense peculiar to *Himself*, frequently stiled *Our Saviour*; so the God and Father of *All*, (who originally so loved the World, as to give his only-begotten Son in this manner for our Salvation,) is, in a Sense peculiar to *Himself* likewise, stiled in the Text *Our Saviour*. The Preaching of This doctrine, saith the Apostle,

postle, was committed unto Me, according to the Commandment of GOD our Saviour; That is, by the Command of Him, who, before the World began, promised to bring us, through his Mercy in Christ, to a *Hope of eternal Life*. The like manner of expression is used by the same Apostle, Gal. i. 4; *Christ gave himself for our Sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil World, according to the Will of GOD, even our Father*. And, 1 Tim. i. 1; *By the Commandment of GOD our Saviour, and (by the Commandment of our) Lord Jesus Christ*. Again, ch. ii. 3, 5; *This is good and acceptable in the sight of GOD our Saviour; ---- For there is One God, and One Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*. And, ch. iv. 10; *We trust in the living GOD, who is the Saviour of all men*. Thus likewise in this epistle to Titus, besides the Instance of my Text, there are two other Passages, wherein the same notion is expressed with great distinctness. Ch. ii. 10; *That they may adorn the Doctrine of GOD our Saviour; ----* it follows imme-

S E R M. diately in the next sentence, ---- and our  
 III. *Saviour Jesus Christ*; ver. 13. And ch.  
 iii. 4, 6; *The Kindness and Love of GOD*  
*our Saviour*; ---- *which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*  
 The Meaning of the Apostle in these expressions, is as evident as possible. *GOD* is *our Saviour*, in the sense that He who *Accepts the Sacrifice* as an Atonement for the Sins of those who truly repent, is the Author of their Salvation: And *Christ* is *our Saviour* in the sense wherein *the Sacrifice itself* saves us. In which sense, He also is by *St Paul* stiled *The Author of eternal Salvation*: Heb. v. 8, 9; *Having learned Obedience* (says he) *by the things which he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him.* Whosoever has not observed this distinction, so expressly and so solicitously inculcated by the Apostle; will find, upon consideration, that he has read or heard the Scriptures, with too little Care and Attention.

## Happiness through Christ.

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III. A *Third* Particular observable in S E R M.  
my Text, is, that This Great Salvation, III.  
this *Hope of eternal Life* upon the gra-  
cious Terms and Conditions of the Gospel,  
is assured to us by the consideration of the  
*Veracity and Immutability* of God: Which  
God, that cannot Lie, hath promised. Thus  
again, 2 Tim. ii. 13; *He cannot deny him-*  
*self*: And Heb. vi. 18; *That by two im-*  
*mutable things, in which it was impossible*  
*for God to lie, we might have a strong Con-*  
*solation.*

WHAT I would principally observe  
upon This Head, is; that the word, *can-*  
*not*, in these and the like expressions, does  
not signify *cannot* in point of *Power*, as  
if a Falsehood was not as *easily* affirmed  
as a Truth; or as if any of God's *Acti-*  
*ons* were *necessary*, in like manner as his  
*eternal and omnipresent Being* or *Know-*  
*ledge* is *necessary*: But the Meaning is,  
that, consistently with his *character*, he  
*cannot*; consistently with his *Goodness*, con-  
sistently with his *Perfections*, he *cannot*,  
either *impose* upon his Creatures, or *do* or  
*require to be done* any thing that is *Evil*.

The



SERM. The like manner of speaking we meet  
 III. with, *Mark vi. 5*; (compared with *Matt.*  
 xiii. 58;) *Jesus could do no mighty Works in*  
*his Own Country, because of their Unbelief.*  
*And Gen. xix. 22*; God says to *Lot*; *Haste*  
*thee, escape thither*; *for I Cannot do any*  
*thing, till thou be come thither.* Evident-  
 ly, not for want of *Power*; But, consist-  
 ently with his present *Purposes and Designs*,  
 consistently with his *Rule and Method* of  
 acting, he *could not* do these things.

THIS compleating of the Sentence by  
 supplying such words as the *Sense* neces-  
 sarily requires, is what all men always do  
 in *common Speech*, and seldom or never  
 mistake in so doing. But in reading of  
*Scripture*, men are much more apt, either  
 negligently or *superstitiously*, to content  
 themselves with the *bare Words*, without  
 attending to the *Sense and Scope* of the  
 Writer; and by that means have founded  
*unintelligible Opinions*, upon Texts whose  
 real Meaning is both *rational* and indeed  
*obvious*.

FOR instance: When God declares in  
*Scripture, I will have mercy, on whom I*  
*will*

## Happiness through Christ.

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will have mercy; Rom. ix. 15; the words S E R M.  
III. necessarily to be supplied, in order to compleat the Sense, are; not, that he will do so, by *arbitrary Appointment*; but that he will do so, by his *righteous and unerring Judgment*.

IN like manner, when the Scripture declares that we are *justified by Faith*, or *saved by Faith*; the Intent and Meaning of the expression is as certain, that *Faith* saves us, not *of itself*, but by being in us a Principle and Foundation of *Virtue*, and by producing in us the Fruits of *Righteous Practice*; as 'tis certain that a *Fruit-tree* feeds or nourishes a man, not by the *Wood* it consists of, but by the *Fruit* it bears. And therefore the same Scripture affirms, not only that we are *justified* by Faith, but likewise that we are *sanctified* by Faith, *Acts* xxvi. 18; and not only that we are saved by *Faith*, but also that we are saved by *Grace*, *Eph.* ii. 5; and saved by *Hope*, *Rom.* viii. 24; and saved by *the Gospel*, *1 Cor.* xv. 2; and by every thing that can be an effectual Root or Ground of *Virtue*.

AGAIN:

SERM.

III.

AGAIN: When we read in Scripture, of God's *hardening mens Hearts*; and concerning the *Israelites particularly*, that notwithstanding all the Miracles God had worked in their sight, yet *he had not given them an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear*; Deut. xxix 4: Whosoever considers all the Parts distinctly, which compleat and fill up the entire Sentence, will wonder how any one can avoid seeing, that God *hardens mens Hearts*, not *by* the influence of his *Power*, not *by* the operation of his *Will* and *Intention*, but *by* those very *Means*, which were designed for their *Conversion*, producing in them a *contrary Effect*. God worked numerous Miracles in the Sight of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, in order to their Conviction, and to bring them to a sense of their Duty; he used Means proper, and abundantly sufficient to That Purpose: And yet by all those Methods, *he produced* in them no true Understanding; but on the contrary *he made them even worse*, and more obstinate than they were before. Did ever any man mistake the Sense of such Expressions

## Happiness through Christ.

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ons as these, when spoken of an *Earthly* S. R. M.  
*Prince* or *Parent*, of an *Earthly Benefac-* III.  
*tor* or *Friend*? By repeated Acts of *Good-*  
*ness* and *Compassion*, by numberless In-  
stances of *Kindness* and *good Treatment*,  
by the most *condescending Intreaties* and by  
the most *affectionate Perswasions*; he has  
*made a rebellious Subject, a disobedient*  
*Child, an ungrateful Friend*, to be even  
*more unreasonable* and in every respect  
*worse* than he was before.

To give but *one* Instance more: When  
we read in Scripture of *Mysteries*, or things  
whose *Depth* it *unfathomable* to our im-  
perfect Understandings; 'tis very absurd  
to imagine, as if we were not to under-  
stand clearly *what is* the thing taught or  
affirmed, or were not to understand dis-  
tinctly the *Meaning of the Words* spoken  
to us. For, in That case, the *Doctrine*  
*itself*, or the *Object of our Belief*, would  
be *Nothing*; Would be *nothing but empty*  
or *insignificant Sounds*: As *St Paul* has  
largely and affectionately argued, in the  
whole *xivth* Chapter of his *1st Epistle* to  
the *Corinthians*. But the true and only  
Sense



S E R M. Sense and Meaning of the word, *Mystery*, according to Scripture, is, to signify a Doctrine, which however *intelligible* possibly even to the meanest Capacity, *what the thing itself revealed to us is*; the *Mystery*, as St Paul expresses it, *now made Manifest to the Saints*, Col. i. 26; yet the whole *Ground and Reason* of the *original Counsel* of God from the Beginning of the World, for his chusing to proceed in such or such a particular manner, may be still (and perhaps for ever) *inscrutable* both to Men and Angels: *For Who hath known the Mind of the Lord? Or Who hath been his Counsellor?* Rom. xi. 34. A remarkable Instance of which matter, is That assertion of the Apostle, which I would take notice of as

IV. THE *Fourth and Last* Particular observable in my Text; namely, that the *Hope of eternal Life* revealed in the Gospel, is what God *promised before the World began, but hath in due times manifested his Word* through Preaching. *Known unto God are all his Works, from the Beginning of the World*; Acts xv. 18. The Method  
of

## Happiness through Christ.

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of his *universal Government* through the *whole System* both of the natural and moral World, is according to certain *uniform Rules* eternally established by unerring Wisdom: And every *particular Dispensation* of Providence, is always some *Design* of Wisdom and Goodness, of Justice and Mercy, carried on through a *long Series* of connected Events, to *one Great* and *ultimately* intended *View*. Hence St Paul begins almost every one of his Epistles, with *This Doctrine*; that the *Mystery* of the Gospel, the Method of God's dispensing his Mercy to Penitents, and bringing men to Salvation by Christ, was fore-ordained and *promised before the World* began: That *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*,-----bath chosen us in Him, *before the Foundation of the World*: That he bath called us,-----according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began. Hence likewise St Peter stiles Christ, 1 Pet. i. 20; *a Lamb without blemish*-----fore-ordained before the *Foundation of the World*: And St John in his Revela-

S E R M.

III.

W

Tit. i. 2.

1 Cor. ii. 7.

Eph. i. 3.

iii. 9.

Col. i. 26.

2 Tim. i.

S E R M. *Revelation, ch. xiii. 8; the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World.*

III.

AND this is, indeed, the true Scripture-  
 notion of *Predestination*. Not that God  
*absolutely and unconditionally*, by an Act  
 of *Sovereignty*, predestinated *particular*  
*Persons* to Salvation; But that by an Act  
 of *Grace and Mercy*, he predestinated or  
 appointed, from the *Foundation of the*  
*World*, the *Person by whom*, and the *Me-*  
*thod in which*, and the *Conditions in com-*  
*pliance with which*, Sinners might obtain  
*Forgiveness and Reconciliation with God:*  
*That in the Dispensation of the Fulness of*  
*Times*, he might gather together in *One* all  
*things in Christ*, both which are in *Hea-*  
*ven*, and which are on *Earth*; Eph. i. 10.  
 And *This Predestination* indeed, is *not ac-*  
*cording to our Works*; that is, 'tis not what  
*Sinful men* could claim *Any Right* to, by  
 virtue of any *Moral Works*, much less by  
 virtue of any *Ceremonial Works*, which  
 such obnoxious *Creatures* were *Themselves*  
 able to perform; but 'tis what proceeds  
 from mere *Goodness and Mercy*, 'tis ac-  
 cording to *God's own purpose and grace*  
 which

## *Happiness through Christ.*

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*which was given us in Christ Jesus, (that S E R M. III. is, which was given to all sincere Penitents in and through Christ,) before the World began; 2 Tim. i. 9.*

HENCE to those who ask, *What Need* of God's appointing this interposition of Christ, seeing he is *Himself* absolute Lord of all? the Answer is plain. God is Supreme Governour and Lord of all, not only in *This particular Time and Place*, which is the Duration and Extent of our present World; but he is Lord of *all absolutely, in all Ages and in all Worlds*; from Eternity to Eternity, and from Infinity to Infinity. And therefore *he* is to dispense his Mercies in *such* Methods, as he himself alone, in his infinite Wisdom, knows to be *most consistent* with the Rules of his *universal and eternal* Government.

HENCE also to those who ask, *Why Christ appeared so Late* in the World? the Answer is no less clear. *Christ* is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever; Heb. xiii. 8. By *Him* God created this World, and by *Him* has governed it from the Beginning. *He* preached by his

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Spirit,



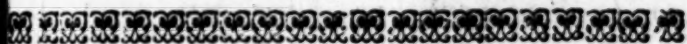
SER M. Spirit, to the *disobedient in the days of*  
 III. *Noah. His Day the Patriarchs rejoiced to*  
 see, and beheld the Promises afar off. Him  
 Moses typified in his whole Law; and con-  
 cerning Him the Prophets searched and  
 inquired diligently, what things the Spirit  
 of Christ which was in them did signify.  
 In the Fulness of Time he appeared visibly  
 as the Hope of Israel, and the Desire and  
 Expectation of Nations. And at the End,  
 by Him will God judge the World in Right-  
 eousness.

THE Application and Conclusion of  
 the whole matter, is; that the *Hope of*  
*eternal Life thus promised before the World*  
*began, is no Hope at all to such as live*  
*wickedly under the Gospel; but to such*  
*only, whose manners are by the Gospel*  
*effectually reformed.*



# SERMON IV.

Of the Fundamentals of Christianity.



HEB. vi. 1, 2.

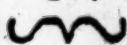
*Therefore leaving the Principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection, not laying again the foundation of Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith towards God; of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands; and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*



THE Apostle in the fore-going SERM.  
IV.  
chapter, having begun to enter  
upon a Sublime discourse, concerning the dignity of our Saviour's Person, and the Authority and  
VOL. IX. F 2 Honour

S E R M.

IV.



Honour of his eternal Priesthood; corrects himself at the 11th verse, for having attempted to explain too difficult a Subject, or rather for attempting to explain it to Persons *not yet* of sufficiently improved capacities, to understand the depth of so great a Mystery. *Of whom,* says he, *We have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing; For when for the time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat; For every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe; But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use, have their Senses exercised to discern both good and evil.* By Milk, he understands the first great and fundamental doctrines of Religion, the Principles and Ground-work of Christianity; those obvious and easy Precepts, which a man is *supposed* to understand at his being first initiated into the Gospel

of Christ; and which are so plain and evident, that he who runs may read them. Such are, the Doctrines concerning the Being and Providence of God, concerning the Necessity of Repentance and Obedience to his Commands, concerning the Certainty of a Life to come, of a Resurrection from the Dead, and of a future Judgment. These Doctrines, are *fundamental* in Christianity, that is, are *covenanted about* at Baptism; they are of absolute and indispensable Necessity, not to the *Perfection* only, but to the very *Life and Subsistence* of Religion. They are the Foundation, upon which the *highest* Improvements of the *best* and most enlarged Understandings, must be entirely built; and which the *lowest* degree of Knowledge in Persons of the *meanest* capacity, must of Necessity extend to; or else it would not be possible they should be Christians at all. They are like the *milk*, or the softest and gentlest food, with which an infant must be nourished, before it can possibly arrive to the strength and firmness and vigour of a Man. By *Strong Meat*, the



S E R M. Apostle means such Doctrines as he proceeds to explain in the following part of this Epistle to the *Hebrews*; Doctrines of a more abstruse and mysterious nature; doctrines that require judgment and understanding, use and longer instruction, exercise and improvement of mens reasoning faculties in the more difficult Studies of religion, to be able to comprehend and reap advantage from them; such Doctrines as the same Apostle elsewhere describes, by *speaking Wisdom among them that are perfect*, 1 Cor. ii. 6: and *speaking the Wisdom of God in a mystery*, ver. 7: Doctrines, concerning the wonderful Dispensation of God, in designing to reconcile all things to himself by Christ, even before the foundation of the World; in revealing himself by degrees to the Patriarchs, and afterwards to the People of the *Jews* by *Moses*; in giving the Law wrapt up under types and shadows; and at length, in the latter Ages of the World, discovering himself more plainly and explicitly by the appearance of his Son; and, in this last and great dispensation, rejecting

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ing the *Jews*, and receiving in the *Gentiles*; yet with an intention, that in the fulness of time, those *others* also should be received in again: And, in this very admission of the *Gentiles* themselves, not making use of the improvements of human Wisdom by Philosophy, but, on the contrary, *revealing himself to babes*, and *choosing the foolish things of the World to confound the Wise*, and *weak things of the World to confound the things that are mighty*. These Doctrines are the Subject, of the greatest part of St *Paul's* Epistles; and these we may reasonably suppose, are what he principally intends to signify by *Strong Meat*. To which may be added, (what he more largely and particularly insists on in this Epistle to the *Hebrews*;) the Doctrine concerning the Dignity of the Person of Christ; the Authority and Honour, of his eternal Priesthood; and the peculiar obligations that lie upon *us*, to go on to a stricter and more perfect Holiness; in consideration of the *Excellency of this new Covenant*, established on so much better promises; in considera-

SERM. tion of the superlative *Dignity* of our  
 IV. *great High-Priest*, and the value of his  
 ~~~~~ *Sacrifice once offered for us for ever*; in  
 consideration of the *Clearness and Plain-*
ness of the Revelation of the Gospel, and
 the determined and unavoidable *wrath* of
 God, against Those who shall *neglect so*
great a Salvation. To the knowledge of
these Doctrines, the Apostle in the Text
 advises us to proceed; and, by a suitable
 improvement in Practice, to go on unto
Perfection: not standing in need to lay
 again perpetually, *the foundation of the*
first Principles of the doctrine of Christ;
 not always beginning a-new at the first
 grounds of Religion, like such as had ne-
 ver been taught before; but going on from
strength to strength, and pressing forward
 continually towards the mark of the prize
 of our high calling. For, it is hardly pos-
 sible, (he tells us,) that such persons as
 perpetually stand in need of laying a-
 gain the foundation of the very first Prin-
 ciples of Christianity, should ever be re-
 newed to an effectual Amendment, or
 ever make any tolerable proficiency in
 Religion,

Religion. *It is impossible*, says he, in the S E R M.
 Words following the Text ; the meaning IV.
 is, *it is extremely difficult* ; if men that
 have once been well instructed, shall so
 far fall away, as to stand in need of ha-
 ving the first elements of religion per-
 petually inculcated to them anew ; *it is*
next to impossible to expect, that they can
 ever be renewed to an effectual Repent-
 ance, to a lasting and persevering Obe-
 dience. *Therefore leaving*, says he, *the*
principles of the Doctrine of Christ ; that
 is, having once made sure that these
 things have been sufficiently inculcated
 and rooted in our minds, so that there
 shall be no danger, nor ought it ever to
 be supposed possible that we should for-
 get or depart from *these* ; let us from
 thenceforward (says he) go on unto Per-
 fection ; not laying again the foundation of
 Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith
 towards God ; of the doctrine of baptisms,
 and of laying on of hands ; and of resur-
 rection of the dead, and of eternal Judg-
 ment.

IN

SERM. IN the Words thus explained, there are
 IV. clearly implied these two things. 1st,
 that there are some great and funda-
 mental Truths, which are as it were *the*
Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, which
 every Christian is supposed to have been
 long since sufficiently instructed in, so as not
 to stand in need of having them perpe-
 tually repeated to him; and These the A-
 postle calls, *laying the Foundation*: There-
 fore leaving *the Principles of the Doctrine*
of Christ, and not *laying again the foun-*
dation. 2^{dly}, that there are some other
 Doctrines of a higher and more sublime
 Nature, in the *Knowledge* of which Chri-
 stians ought to improve themselves, in
 order to establish themselves in a more
perfect Practice: *Let us go on*, says he,
unto Perfection.

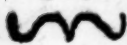
I. *First*; THAT there are some great
 and fundamental Truths, which are as it
 were *the Principles of the Doctrine of*
Christ, which every Christian is supposed
 to have been long since sufficiently in-
 structed in, so as not to stand in need of
 having them perpetually repeated to him,
 nor

nor to be in any danger of forgetting or neglecting them: And These the Apostle calls, *laying the Foundation*. Now What these Fundamental Doctrines are, that there might be no difficulty, no dispute about them, he enumerates distinctly in the words of the Text; *Repentance from dead works, and Faith towards God; the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of laying on of hands; the Resurrection of the Dead, and eternal Judgment.*

THE *first* of these, in order of Nature, is *Faith towards God*. For this must evidently be the first Principle of all Religion, the beginning and corner-stone even of the Foundation itself. *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; Heb. xi. 6.* This is the first Principle, not of the Doctrine of *Christ* only, but also of the Law of *Moses*, of the institution of the *Patriarchs*, of the Precepts of *Noah*, of the Religion of *Nature* itself, even among those who never had the benefit of divine Revelation. *This Truth is found*
written

S E R M. written in the most legible characters,

IV.



not in the inspired Scriptures only, but in the writings of the *Philosophers*, in the Discourses of the *Learned*, in the Consciences of the *Unlearned*, in the Hearts of all reasonable and considerate men, in the Instincts of *Animals*, in the Motions and Proportions even of the *Inanimate* World itself. And is it not a Shame that *Men*, that Men endued with *Reason* and *Understanding*, that Men who live in a *learned* and a polite Age, that men who enjoy moreover the Light of the *Gospel-Revelation*, and have been long instructed out of the Oracles of God? Is it not a Shame, that *They* should need to have *This* Foundation laid for them any more? Is it imaginable, that after the Experience of *Ages*, and the Consent of *Nations*; after the wonderful improvements of *natural* knowledge, and repeated Demonstrations of Wisdom, discovered in the Works of *Creation*; after the strict Examinations of *Scripture*, and the Objections of Adversaries considered and answered abundantly over and over again; is it imaginable there should

should still be persons, who want to be SERM.
 constantly reminded, of this very *first* IV.
 Principle of Religion? And yet so it is, 
 that even at this day, in the midst of the
 greatest Light of Knowledge the World
 ever enjoyed, there are some mens Minds
 exactly answering to Job's elegant de-
 scription of the Shadow of Death; Their
 Mind, with respect to the Knowledge of
 Divine things, is a place of *Darkness*, as
Darkness itself, without any order, and
where the Light is as Darkness. There
 are even yet *perverse disputes of men of*
corrupt minds, who are desirous to call
 in question the very *Being* of him, in
 whom themselves *live and move and have*
their Being, and without whom nothing
 could have ever been at all. Which is
 the same Folly, as if a man should deny
 there was any Light in the World, while
 he himself walked in the Brightness of
 the Sun shining in his Strength; or like
 the foolish Philosopher of old, who pre-
 tended to dispute against the Being of
 Motion, while he himself was on all Sides
 surrounded with its visible and perpetual
 Effects.

S E R M. Effects. 'Tis to be hoped therefore, there

IV. will be No Necessity, to be *always* laying
 ~~~~~ This Foundation among the Professors of  
 Christianity; or to be *always* reminding  
 them, of what it ought never to be sup-  
 posed they can possibly be ignorant. But  
 tho' they can never indeed be presumed  
 to be insensible of the *Being* of God; yet  
 to *meditate* more frequently on what  
 they cannot but know; and with greater  
 seriousness and attention to endeavour to  
 think *worthily* of *Him*, in whose presence  
 they always walk, and open to whose eyes  
 are all their Thoughts; of *This* they can  
 never too frequently be reminded. For,  
 to believe a God, or to have *Faith in him*,  
 is not barely the giving a careless Assent to  
 what we hear or are taught concerning  
 him; but 'tis seriously considering and re-  
 presenting it to ourselves in our constant  
 Thoughts and Meditations, as a Truth of  
 the utmost importance to us, and where-  
 in we are the most nearly concerned;  
 that there is an infinite and eternal Being,  
 a Being All-Powerful and All-Wise, a Be-  
 ing whose presence is in every place, and  
 whose

whose years endure throughout all Ages; S E R M.  
IV.  
 who created the World by his incomprehensible Power, preserves and governs it by his Wisdom and Goodness, and will judge it by his Justice, Mercy and Truth. 'Tis such a Belief, as will naturally influence us to adore his inaccessible Glory and Majesty, to dread his Power, to admire his Wisdom, to fear his Justice, to love his Goodness, to hope for his Mercy, to depend upon his Truth. This is what the Apostle here stiles *Faith towards God*, and is the *first* of all the fundamental *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*.

*Secondly*; THE next Principle in order of Nature, though *first* mentioned by the Apostle in the Text, is *Repentance from Dead Works*. And this is a natural consequence of *having Faith towards God*. For he who *believes* in God, must consequently believe, that *Obedience* is necessary to be paid to his Commands. And then they who perform not that most just Obedience, but obstinately *transgress* the Commands of their Supreme Governor; must be confessed to deserve the severest

SERM. severest Punishment. Which Punishment  
IV.

there is no possible means for the Offender to avoid, but by a timely *Repentance*. And the only satisfactory Evidence of the Truth of that Repentance, is a departure from *dead Works* to serve the living God: From *dead works*, that is, from the practice of such Wickedness, as, both by the natural consequence of things, and by the righteous judgment and appointment of God, brings Men to Destruction and *Death*; to Destruction, both of Body and Soul; to Death, both temporal and eternal: To that eternal Death, which, being a total and perpetual separation of the Soul from God the only Author of Life and Happiness, is, in Scripture sense, the only real and proper Death; Natural and temporal Death, or the dissolution of the Body for a time, being but as imperfect and figurative a representation of *This Death eternal*, as the still shorter Suspension of the Faculties of the Mind in Sleep, is but a weak and faint Image or Resemblance of *Death Temporal*. Most closely and necessarily therefore with *Faith* towards

towards God, with a Belief and Fear of his Power and Justice, is connected this *second Principle of Religion, Repentance from Dead Works.* When once God is acknowledged and firmly believed, to be the Supreme Governour and Judge of the World; when once the mind of man has entertained deep and strong impressions, true and worthy apprehensions of the Nature and Perfections of the divine Majesty; it then immediately appears evident, that as all *Inanimate* Creatures, by the Necessity of their Nature, obey the Laws which he has appointed them, in the Constitution and Fabrick of this beautiful System of the material World; and, even *that* *Sense, all things,* as the Scripture expresses it, *serve him* so *reasonable* Creatures much *more,* by their Understanding and Will which he has indusd them with, being sensible of their Dependence upon him and of the Gratitude they owe him, ought to make it the Business and the Pleasure of their Lives, to shew forth the Praises and Glory of their Maker, by a cheerful Obedience to his



S E R M. Commands in all things. *If I be a Father,*  
 IV. *where is mine honour? And if I be a Ma-*  
 ster, *where is my Fear? saith the Lord of*  
*Hosts; Mal. i. 6.* The best and most per-  
 fect of Created Beings, Angels and Saints  
 in Heaven, do this perpetually; And men  
 upon Earth, according to the ability and  
 capacity of their Nature, ought to look up-  
 on it as the highest improvement and per-  
 fection of their Faculties, to imitate here-  
 in that which is the greatest Glory; that  
 which is the only Ambition (if we may  
 so speak) of the Inhabitants of Heaven.  
 To act otherwise than thus, and to op-  
 pose the Will of our Supreme Governour  
 and greatest Benefactor; to transgress  
 wilfully the just and righteous Commands  
 of Him to whose Goodness we owe our  
 Being, Ourselves, and all that we enjoy or  
 hope for; is the utmost Unworthiness;  
 and even no less an Absurdity, for a rea-  
 sonable Creature to act so unreasonably,  
 than it would be for any of the natural  
 Bodies in the World to move unnaturally.  
 To set up the obstinate Self-Will of frail  
 dust and ashes, against the Supreme good  
 pleasure

pleasure of the Maker of all things; un-  
reasonable Appetites and Passions, in op-  
position to the eternal reason and equity  
of things; irregularity and confusion, in  
opposition to the order and harmony of  
Nature by which the Universe subsists;  
(all which, is done by profaneness and  
unrighteousness, by irreligion, wickedness  
and debauchery of all kinds;) is what,  
(if *any thing* can provoke God, and un-  
less we think God is *wholly unconcerned*  
for the welfare and government of the  
World,) must needs be acknowledged to  
deserve, the highest resentment of the di-  
vine displeasure. That Persons who act  
thus disorderly in the *reasonable* World,  
should be severely punished, and, if in-  
corrigible, be utterly destroyed; is as ne-  
cessary, as that any Obstacle, which would  
disturb the Motion of the Earth or Hea-  
vens, and would drive back this regular  
Frame into the confusion of its ancient  
Chaos, should be removed by the Care of  
the Supreme Artificer. A wicked man  
therefore, whenever he is convinced and  
become satisfied, that this is his case; at

S E R M. 'tis demonstratively the Case of every wicked

IV.

ed and disorderly Person; there is nothing in reason left for him to do, but immediately, with the utmost indignation against his own Folly, to repent in dust and ashes; to cry mightily unto God for pardon, who is able to save; and, in the Apostle's phrase, to show forth his *Faith towards God*, by an effectual *Repentance from dead Works*. This therefore is the *second Principle of Religion*, or of the *Doctrine of Christ*: A Principle absolutely necessary to be laid as the Foundation of all Virtue; the Beginning or lowest degree whereof, is the forsaking of Vice; And yet 'tis such a Foundation, as, if it always be laying, 'tis evident men can never go on to any *Perfection*. 'Tis equally necessary therefore, that Christians should repent; and yet that they should not stand in need of being *always repenting*. *Always repenting*, not of daily infirmities, which are unavoidable; but of new and great crimes continually repeated; Of *Repentance from These*, I say, the Scripture never supposes a Christian to stand

stand frequently in need. For of such persons the Apostle declares, in the words following the Text, that because they are always *falling away*, therefore 'tis impossible they should ever be *renewed* to an effectual *Repentance*.

*Thirdly*; THE next fundamental Principle of Christian Religion, here mentioned by the Apostle, is the *Doctrine of Baptisms and of laying on of Hands*. Repentance, as has been already shown, under the foregoing Head, is the indispensable Duty of all Sinners: And the consideration of the Placability, the original Mercy and Goodness of God, affords very great ground of Hopes, even to *natural Reason*, that such Repentance will be accepted of God. Yet since Hope, in the nature of the thing itself, differs necessarily from the certainty and assurance of Knowledge; (For *Hope that is seen*, as St Paul argues, (Rom. viii. 24;) is not *Hope*; for, what a man sees, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with Patience wait for it :) Since therefore Hope, I



S E R M. say, differs necessarily from the Assurance  
 IV. of Knowledge; and as it implies a well-  
 grounded expectation of what we do reasonably hope for, so at the same time it implies likewise a Possibility of falling short of what we do but hope for; therefore it has pleased God to confirm this natural Hope, by the certainty of an express Revelation in Christ, that he will accept the Repentance of Sinners. And this assurance he has commanded to be sensibly conveyed to us, by a very significant Rite in the Sacrament of Baptism; Which Sacrament is for that reason stiled in Scripture, *the Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins*. And this Baptism is therefore a fundamental Principle of the Doctrine of Christ; who, as he came to ascertain our Hope of God's accepting Repentance, so he has declared, that *except (in order thereunto) a man be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. To this the Apostle adds, as a constant Appendage, *the laying on of Hands*; (the doctrine, saith he, of Baptisms and of laying

laying on of Hands :) Because, by that SER. M. IV.  
 Rite, newly baptized Persons were in the  
 Apostles Times endued with the Holy  
 Ghost; and by the same Rite, spiritual  
 Orders were conferred, for the ministrati-  
 on of Repentance by the Word and Sa-  
 craments; and by it, Penitents in the  
 Primitive times were admitted into the  
 Church again, after the Solemnities of  
 their publick Repentance. And each of  
 these, as well as Baptism itself, were ap-  
 pointed to be administred but *once*; that  
 Christians might not neglect to *go on un-*  
*to Perfection*, by being perpetually laying  
 a-new the foundation of Religion, and  
 perpetually going back to the first Prin-  
 ciples thereof.

*Fourthly*; THE *last* Principle of the Do-  
 ctrine of Christ, mentioned here by the A-  
 postle as the *Foundation* of all Religion;  
 is the *Resurrection of the Dead, and eternal*  
*Judgment*. I mention these two together,  
 as but one; because in the nature of  
 things they are necessarily connected with  
 each other. For the Resurrection of the  
 Dead, is only in order to Judgment; and

S E R M.

IV.

eternal Judgment is a certain and necessary consequence of the Resurrection from the Dead. Both these together therefore, are a fundamental Principle of the Doctrine of Christ; and, (if there can be any Difference,) the most absolutely fundamental of all others. For in every great design, that which is last in Execution, is always first and principal in the Intention; and 'tis the considerableness of the *End* always, that gives *Birth* to any Undertaking, and *Continuance* in it when it is begun. This *last* therefore of the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, the *Resurrection* and *Judgment*, is that on which all the rest are built, and on which they entirely depend. 'Tis This which gives all Authority to the Commands of Christ, and Life and Vigour to the whole System of the Gospel. 'Tis this makes *Faith* towards God so reasonable, and *Repentance* from dead works so necessary, and *Obedience* to the whole Gospel so indispensable. Without This, our *Faith* in God would be vain, our *Repentance* from dead works fruitless, and our *Obedience* unprofitable and

and ineffectual. For if there be no Resurrection of the Dead, then is our preaching vain, and your Faith also is vain. This therefore is so evidently a fundamental Principle, that in all reason it ought to be presumed, whoever has made any tolerable proficiency in Christianity, nay whoever makes any Profession of it at all, needs not to have this foundation perpetually laid a-new for him, but may be supposed always to be sufficiently sensible of *This* great Truth, if he pretends to have any part in the Gospel of Christ.

THE Application or Use I shall make of what has been hitherto said, shall be only this Observation; that the Doctrine of *Fundamentals*, about which learned and contentious men have raised great Disputes, is really, from this passage of the Apostle, exceedingly clear and manifest. For the *only* Fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, (*viz.* those covenanted about at Baptism,) are plainly these; that we have *Faith towards God*; that we *Repent from dead Works*; that we have the Acceptableness of this Repentance assured

to



SERMON. to us through Christ in the ministration  
 IV. of the Word and Sacraments, stiled here  
 by the Apostle the *Doctrine of Baptism*  
*and of laying on of hands*; and lastly, that  
 we live as becomes such persons who are  
 in continual expectation, of a *Resurrection*  
*from the dead*, and of *eternal judgment*.  
 These, I say, are plainly the *only* Funda-  
 mentals of Christianity; About these there  
 can be no controversy; In these there can  
 be no Ignorance, no not among Persons of  
 the meanest Capacity. And *besides* these,  
 whatever other Doctrines are occasionally  
 taught, or eagerly disputed about, they  
 cannot be of the *Foundation* of Religion;  
 but men may differ concerning them with  
 Peace and Charity; and yet every one  
 hold fast the root of their confidence, the  
 assurance of their Salvation, in these un-  
 disputed Doctrines of *Faith* and *Obr-*  
*dience*.

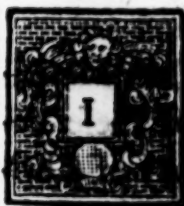
SERMON

# S E R M O N V.

Christians ought to endeavour to  
attain Perfection.

H E B. VI. 1, 2.

*Therefore leaving the Principles of the  
Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Per-  
fection; not laying again the Foundation  
of Repentance from dead Works, and of  
Faith towards God; of the Doctrine of  
Baptisms, and of laying on of hands;  
and of Resurrection of the Dead, and of  
eternal Judgment.*



N the Words I have before S E R M.  
observed these two things: V.

*1<sup>st</sup>, THAT there are some  
great and fundamental Truths,  
which are as it were the Prin-  
ciples of the Doctrine of Christ; which  
every*

S E R M. every Christian is supposed to have been  
 V. long since sufficiently instructed in, so as  
 not to stand in need of having them perpetually repeated to him; And these the Apostle calls, *laying the Foundation*. Therefore leaving the *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*; and not laying again the *Foundation*.

2dly, THAT there are some other doctrines, of a higher and more sublime nature, in the *Knowledge* of which Christians ought to improve themselves, in order to establish themselves in a more perfect *Practice*. *Let us go on*, saith he, *unto Perfection*.

I HAVE already considered the former of these; namely, the *first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*: It remains that I proceed at this time, to discourse upon our improvement in such *Knowledge* and *Practice*, as the Apostle here stiles going on unto *Perfection*.

IT would be an unspeakable Happiness, and beyond the Hopes of these degenerate times; if the *generality* of Christians did but competently understand the  
 first

first Principles of their Religion, and in SERM.  
 their Practice preserve themselves but even V.  
 upon the *Foundation* of the Gospel. But   
 yet 'tis very necessary, that those who are  
 capable of greater improvements in *Know-*  
*ledge*, should be exhorted to make conti-  
 nual progress in the Study of the more  
 sublime Doctrines of Christianity; that  
 they may *know the Love of Christ*, and be  
 able to *comprehend with all Saints, what*  
*is the length, and breadth, and depth, and*  
*height*: And with regard to *Practice*,  
 unless men be perswaded, to *endeavour* to  
 go on unto *Perfection*, they will hardly  
 live up steddily and constantly to the Ob-  
 ligation, even of the first Principles of Re-  
 ligion; nor, without a further Design of  
 a suitable *Superstructure*, be able long to  
 maintain themselves upon the *Foundation*  
 itself.

THE *Doctrines*, which the Apostle  
 supposes Christians obliged to improve  
 themselves in, after their instruction in  
 the most *fundamental* ones recited in the  
 Text, are such as he proceeds to treat of  
 in the following part of this Epistle, con-  
 cerning



**SERMON.** concerning the Nature and Dignity, of the  
**V.** Person of Christ; the Authority and Honour, of his eternal Priesthood; the value of his Sacrifice, once offered for us for ever; the Preparations for the Gospel, made by divine Providence, from the beginning of the World; and discovered by degrees, in God's Dispensations to the Patriarchs, in the Priesthood of *Melchisedech*, in the appointment of the order of *Aaron*, in the giving of the Law to *Moses* by the Disposition of Angels; and ending in the appearance of the Son of God himself, to establish a New and more excellent Covenant, with greater Clearness, upon better Promises, and for an endless Duration. These Doctrines are the Subject of the greater part of *St Paul's* Epistles, and are *highly* worthy, of our most serious meditation and study, and of the most careful and particular Explication. But because most of them will come to be severally treated of, upon other occasions; and because Advancement in Knowledge, though highly commendable, and in some measure necessary, according to every man's

man's abilities, and capacities, and opportunities, and advantages; yet is not so absolutely and indispensably, so universally necessary, as Improvement in *Practice*, wherein Persons of all capacities are obliged to endeavour to become Perfect; therefore, omitting the consideration of that part of Perfection, which consists in the enlargement of our Understanding and Knowledge; I shall confine my present Discourse, to explain the intent and meaning of this precept of the Apostle, under the limit of its being an Exhortation to Perfection in *Practice*. *Leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection.*

AND is it then possible that mortal man, should in any Sense attain unto Perfection? Is it possible that Dust and Ashes, who may say to Corruption, *thou art my Father*; and to the worm, *thou art my Mother and Sister*? Is it possible that we, who are born in Sin, and conceived in Iniquity; who are brought forth in ignorance, and grow up in multiplicity of Errors; whose Understandings are dark, our Wills biased,

SERMON. sed, our Passions strong, our Affections  
 V. corrupted, our Appetites inordinate, our  
 Inclinations irregular? Is it possible that  
 we who are surrounded with Things  
 themselves obscure, with Examples evil,  
 with Temptations numberless as the va-  
 riety of Objects that encompass us; Is it  
 possible that *We*, should make *any* Pro-  
 gress towards arriving at *Perfection*? With  
*Men* indeed, this must needs be impossible;  
 but with *God*, all things are possible. For  
 when we consider on the *other side*, that  
 we have a perfect Rule, and an unerring  
 Instructor; an Example compleat as the  
 Divine Life, and yet with all the Conde-  
 scensions of Humane Infirmity; Motives  
 strong and powerful, as the Rewards of  
 Heaven; and pressing, as the Necessity of  
 avoiding endless Destruction; Assistances  
 mighty, as the Grace of God; and effec-  
 tual as the continual Guidance of the  
 Spirit of Truth: When we consider *This*,  
 I say; we may then perhaps be as apt to  
 wonder on the *other hand*, that *All* men  
 are not Perfect. And yet, with all these  
 Advantages, the Perfection that the best  
 of

of men ever arrive to, is but in a figurative and very imperfect Sense; with great allowances, and much diminution; with frequent defects and many, very many Limitations.

S E R M.

V.

IN order to explain therefore this Exhortation of the Apostle, *Let us go on unto Perfection*; it may not be improper 1<sup>st</sup>, to consider distinctly what it is, that, in Scripture-sense, is stiled *Perfection*; and 2<sup>dly</sup>, To show the Necessity of our endeavouring to attain it.

*First*; W E are to consider what it is, that, in Scripture-sense, is stiled *Perfection*. And here, if we observe, that *the things* the Apostle in the Text *opposes Perfection to*, are of two sorts; 1<sup>st</sup>, the *Principles themselves* of the Doctrine of Christ; Faith and Repentance, Baptism and the Expectation of a Judgment to come; and 2<sup>dly</sup>, such a defective *Practice* upon these Principles, as makes a man always stand in need of *renewing the Foundation* of his Religion; it will appear, that *Perfection*, in the Apostle's sense, must likewise on the contrary signify two things; 1<sup>st</sup>, Some



S E R M. particular *Virtues*, peculiar to such, as  
 V. have made considerable Progress in Religion, beyond the first Principles or Elements of the Doctrine of Christ; and  
 2dly, Some peculiar degree of Improvement in the general Practice of all *Virtues*; attained to by such, as are advanced beyond danger of needing to begin again at the Foundation of Religion; that is, such Persons as our Saviour calls *just men, who need no Repentance*; or, in the Apostle's phrase, who need not to lay again the *Foundation of Repentance from dead Works; and of Faith towards God*.

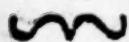
1st; PERFECTION denotes some particular *Virtues*, peculiar to such, as have made considerable Progress in Religion, beyond the first Principles or Elements of the Doctrine of Christ. *Believing in God; Repenting from dead Works*, that is, forsaking all gross Sins; being *baptized* into the name of Christ; and living in expectation of a *Judgment to come*; are Principles, without which a man cannot so much as *begin* to be a Christian: But after this, it is necessary that he likewise proceed further,

further, to the attainment of some more S E R M.  
 excellent and exalted Virtues; in order to  
*perfect* that which was well *begun*. The  
*particular Virtues*, to which the Scripture  
 generally ascribes this high degree of Im-  
 provement; and the attainment of which,  
 St Paul in this Epistle particularly ex-  
 plains to be the *going on unto Perfection*;  
 are these which follow.

I. THAT *Holiness* and *Purity* of  
 Mind, which implies our being in an ex-  
 traordinary manner separated from, and  
 raised above, corrupt and sensual Desires;  
 the *keeping ourselves unspotted from the*  
*World*, as St James expresses it; and ha-  
 ving our affections fixed steddily and con-  
 stantly upon religious and heavenly things  
 as our Great and Principal End. That  
 Purity of Mind, of which *Repentance from*  
*dead Works* is the *first beginning*; and of  
 which the Terrours of the Law, *the Moun-*  
*tain that burned with fire*, and *the black-*  
*ness and darkness and tempest*, are the *first*  
*Motives*, as the Apostle in the *xii<sup>th</sup>* chap-  
 ter of this epistle describes them; but its  
*Improvement and Perfection*, is owing to the

S E R M.

V.



*on better Promises; to the contemplation of our being come unto mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of Angels; to the general Assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the New covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. In a word; That Holiness and Purity, which St Peter describes, 1 Pet. i. 15; As he which has called you, is holy; so be ye holy in all manner of Conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.*

2. ANOTHER particular Virtue, the attainment of which is peculiarly implied in this phrase of *going on unto Perfection*; is that universal Love and Christian Charity, which our Saviour calls his *New Commandment*; which St Paul declares to be the *fulfilling of the Law*, and which he particularly exhorts to at the End of this

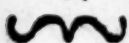
this Epistle; *Let Brotherly Love continue*; S E R M.  
 ch. xiii. ver. 1: And ver. 16; *To do good*  
*and to communicate forget not, for with*  
*such Sacrifices God is pleased.* Of which  
 universal Love and Charity, (the peculiar  
 effect of a true Christian Spirit prevailing  
 among men,) 'tis very remarkable, that  
 the two great Branches of it, the *loving*  
*or doing good to our Enemies* and *shewing*  
*mercy to the poor*, are both of them in  
 Scripture expressly called by the Name of  
 Perfection. Above all things, saith St  
 Paul, *put on Charity, which is the Bond*  
*of Perfectness*; Col. iii. 14: And *Love your*  
*Enemies*, saith our Saviour, *do good to them*  
*that hate you*; *that ye may be the children*  
*of your Father which is in Heaven*; for he  
*maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on*  
*the good, and sendeth rain on the just and*  
*on the unjust*: *Be ye therefore Perfect, even*  
*as your Father which is in Heaven is Per-*  
*fect*; St Matt. v. 44. Which last words  
 St Luke thus varies; *Be ye therefore Mer-*  
*ciful, as your Father also is Merciful*;  
 St Luk. vi. 36: As if Perfection was but  
 another word, of the same signification  
 with Mercy and Goodness.



SERM.

3. BY *Perfection*, the Apostle in

V.



this Exhortation still more particularly means, That established *Firmness and Constancy* in the Profession of Christianity, which enables a man even to *suffer* for the sake of his Religion; for the sake of Truth, Righteousness, and Virtue; and which alone can secure to him the Benefit of those Advances, which he has already made towards being a Follower of Jesus: The Remission of Sins in Baptism being cancelled again to him, that should afterwards deny his Saviour; and Repentance from dead Works being of no benefit to such a Person, as afterward through Fear and Want of Steadiness returns to them again. This appears from the words immediately following the Text; where the Apostle strengthens his Exhortation of *going on unto Perfection*, by proceeding to set forth the extremely dangerous state, of those who for want of it should *fall away*. And almost the whole following part of the Epistle, is spent in perswading men, by all the Arguments both of Encouragement and Terrour, to attain to this Perfection of being able to *suffer Persecution*

*cution*

cution for Christ. Our Saviour himself S E R M.  
 is described to have been made *perfect* by V.  
*Sufferings*, ch. ii. ven 10: And in prophesying beforehand of those Sufferings, he expresses it himself by the same phrase, St Luke xiii. 32 ; *I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.* In like manner ; warning his Disciples of the Persecutions they must expect to meet with, he tells them, St Luke vi. 40 ; *The Disciple is not above his Master ; but every one that is Perfect, shall be as his Master ;* that is, as 'tis explained in the parallel place, St Matt. x. 24, must expect to be persecuted like him. And giving instruction to the young man, who desired to know what he must do to be Perfect ; *If thou wilt be Perfect, saith he, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me.* But

2dly ; As *Perfection* denotes thus some particular Virtues, peculiar to such as have made considerable Progress in Religion, beyond the first Principles or Elements of the Doctrine of Christ ; so it signifies also some peculiar Degree of Im-

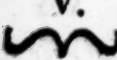
SERM. *provement, in the general Practice of all*

V. *Virtues, attained to by such, as are advanced beyond danger of needing to begin again at the Foundation of Religion: And what that peculiar degree of Improvement is, remains next to be explained. That it is not an absolute and compleat Freedom from All Sin, the Scripture, in conjunction with Experience and with the Reason of things, clearly assures us; telling us, that in many things we offend All; and that if we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. Agreeably to which, and to the known infirmity of the Nature of Man, holy Job declares of himself; If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse; Job ix. 20. But the plain meaning of that Degree of Improvement in Goodness, to which the Holy Ghost in Scripture has vouchsafed to give the title of Perfection, may briefly be expressed in these three particulars.*

I. THAT it amounts to an entire Uprightness of the Intention and Endeavour;

your; an *Integrity* of the Heart and Affections: which though, in this present frail state, it cannot possibly have so steadily an effect, as to make all a man's *Actions* perfectly free from Failing, yet it must signify that the main *Design* of his Life, be always perfectly sincere. Hence *Uprightness* or *Integrity*, and *Perfection*, are promiscuously used in Scripture to the same sense. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is Peace*; Ps. xxxiii. 7. And God's command to *Abraham*, which we render, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*, Gen. xviii. 1; is in the original, *be thou upright*. And in the character of *Job*, the words are joined together, *Job i. 8*; he was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And in the same signification that 'tis said of *Noah*, Gen. vi. 9; that he was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and that *David* declares his own pious resolution, Ps. ci. 3; *I will walk in my house with a perfect heart*; in the same signification 'tis affirmed of some of the good Kings of *Judah*, that



SERM. that their *Heart* was right with the Lord  
 V.  their God, that is, it was *upright* and *sincere*; and that they *sought him* with their whole *Heart*: Which is of the same import, with what our Saviour calls *Loving the Lord our God with all our Heart*: The meaning is; not, being free from all Frailties and Imperfections, (which, in the present state, is impossible,) but, according to the best of our abilities, dedicating ourselves steddily and uniformly to the service of God, to the search after Truth, and to the practice of Righteousness; not serving two Masters, not dividing our Affections between God and Mammon, between the Love of Sin and the Desire of obeying God's commands: Which is generally the case of those who have but newly begun to *lay the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works*.

2. PERFECTION implies *universality* of that Obedience in the *Extent*, which it is not possible should be faultless and compleat in the *Degree*. He that indulges any one sinful Habit; that in other things keepeth the whole Law, but knowingly

ingly and habitually offendeth in any one SERMON.  
great point; is so far from being *Perfect*, V.  
even in the *least strict* and *Scripture sense*  
of the Word; that he can hardly be truly  
said, to have so much as begun to lay  
the *Foundation* of Religion, in that first  
and most necessary Principle, of *Repentance*  
from *dead Works*. Concerning righteous  
and upright Persons, the Scripture  
always declares that they *do not*, nay that  
they *cannot* commit Sin, 1 *Joh. iii. 9*; that,  
morally speaking, 'tis *certain* they will not  
fall into any gross or habitual Impiety:  
But, that they *cleanse themselves* from All  
*filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, *perfecting*  
*Holiness in the Fear of God*; 2 *Cor. vii. 1*:  
And that *the man of God must be perfect*,  
*thoroughly furnished unto All good Works*;  
2 *Tim. iii. 17*. And according to this de-  
claration, the character of good and vir-  
tuous Persons, such as were *Zacharias* and  
*Elizabeth*, is, that they *walk in All the*  
*Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord*  
*blameless*; St *Luke i. 6*; in *all his Com-*  
*mandments* universally without exception;  
that is, without allowing themselves in  
the

SERMON. the Practice of any one known Sin. And  
 V. yet even that universal Blamelessnes, does  
 not exclude the common infirmities of our  
 Nature; for so *Zacharias* himself, immediately after this singular character, is  
 charged with a frailty of Unbelief, and  
 struck dumb for it. And *St. John* in the  
 very same Epistle, wherein, with respect  
 to *Wickedness*, he declares that a good man  
 does not, nay cannot sin; yet with regard  
 to unavoidable *Infirmities*, he assures even  
 the Best of Men, that if they say they  
 have no Sin, they deceive themselves and  
 the Truth is not in them. *Yer. 1. 16. and*  
*2. 3.* By being *Perfect* is signified a  
 man's having attained such a *Habit* of  
 doing Righteousness, or of virtuous living,  
 as that it is become easy and delightful,  
 and, in a manner, a natural to him;  
 without any of that difficulty and reluctance,  
 which usually attend the first Beginnings  
 of Repentance from dead Works. This Progress is excellently described in  
 the Book of Ecclesiasticks, *Ich. ix. 16, 17,*  
*18.* At the first, Wisdom will walk with  
 a man by crooked ways, and bring fear  
 and

and dread upon him; and torment him with S E R M.  
 her discipline, until she may trust his Soul; V.  
 and try him by her laws; then will she  
 return the straight way unto him; and com-  
 fort him, and he shall inherit her; and his  
 generation shall hold her in possession. And  
 more briefly by Solomon, Prov. iv. 18; *The*  
*path of the just is as the shining light, that*  
*shineth more and more unto the perfect*  
*day.* When a man loves *Virtue*, and can  
 say with the Psalmist, that his *delight* is  
 in the Law of God; and with our Savi-  
 our, that his *meat and drink* is to do the  
 Will of him that sent him; then he be-  
 gins to approach towards the *Angelick*  
 state; nay he becomes partaker, says St  
*Peter*, even of the *divine Nature* itself:  
 And St *Paul*, describing his own experi-  
 ence in this matter, thus expresses it, Gal.  
 ii. 20; *I am crucified with Christ: Ne-*  
*vertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ li-*  
*vethe in me; and the life which I now live*  
*in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son*  
*of God, who loved me and gave himself for*  
*me.*

HAVING



SERM. HAVING thus explained what is meant  
 V. by *Perfection* in the Scripture-sense; it  
 remains that I show briefly in the

*Second* place, the Necessity of our endeavouring to attain it. And here it is evident,

1<sup>st</sup>; THAT unless we continually strive and press forward toward *Perfection*, we shall never make so much as any tolerable *Progress*. He that never hopes to finish the *Superstructure*, will, as the Apostle expresses it in the Text, be always laying again the *Foundation* of Religion, and never be renewed to an effectual Repentance. The *Luke-warm* Person, is by our Saviour described in the *Revelation*, to be *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, and not capable of any inheritance among them that are *arrayed in fine linen*, which is the *Righteousness* and the good Works of the Saints. Whoever has a right Sense of Religion, will perpetually be endeavouring to grow in *Grace*, and in the *Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; he will with *St Paul*, never think he has *already attained*, or is  
*already*

to attain Perfection.

III

already perfect; but forgetting those things, SERM.  
which are behind, and reaching forth unto V.  
those things which are before, he will al-  
ways press forward towards the mark, for  
the prize of the high calling of God in  
Christ Jesus. He will never think him-  
self sufficiently advanced; but gaining  
continually a more and more compleat  
Victory over his Frailties and Infirmities,  
will go from strength to strength in the  
Improvements of Virtue here, till he ap-  
pear before God in the Perfection of Holi-  
ness and of Glory hereafter.

2dly; 'Tis necessary to endeavour af-  
ter the *Perfection* hitherto described, be-  
cause without it we can have no settled  
Peace in *this World*, nor Assurance of  
Happiness in the next. *Fears and Doubts,*  
*Scruples and endless Anxiety,* must in  
great measure be the Portion, of him  
that is always laying anew the *Founda-*  
*tion of Religion*: But when a man is be-  
come *Perfect* in the Sense now explained,  
in the merciful and Gospel-sense of the  
word, which makes all reasonable allow-  
ance for unavoidable Frailty; then it is  
I that

SERM. that he attains that Tranquillity and Assurance, that Peace and Satisfaction of Mind; which wise men have compared to a *continual Feast*; which is indeed a fore-taste of the Happiness of Heaven, and a rejoicing before-hand in Christ, with *joy unspeakable and full of Glory*. Such a Person as has arrived at this improved State of Religion; *lives in Peace, and dies with Assurance*; and at the appearance of our Lord, shall be *presented faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding Joy*.

I ONLY add two very brief Inferences, from what has been said, and so conclude. And

*First*; 'Tis evident that the *Perfection* recommended in Scripture, does not consist in Works of *Supererogation*, as the Church of *Rome* has vainly imagined. It does not consist in Will-Worship and Works of voluntary Humility; Works performed over and above the Commandments of God, and beyond the Obligation of our Christian Duty: All which things are vain and impossible; and are

only,

only, as St Paul expresses it, mens *beginning* themselves of their reward, an *intending* into those things which they have not seen, and a being vainly *puffed up* with their *fleshy mind*. But true Perfection, and that which is possible and necessary for us to attain, consists, as has been shown, in these three things, in the *Uprightness*, the *Universality*, and the *Habitualness* of our Obedience.

Secondly, WHAT has been said concerning the true nature of Christian Perfection, may suffice to remove needless Fears and Scruples out of the Minds of melancholy and pious Persons; who, when they read that they are commanded to be perfect, even as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect, are apt to be dejected and look upon their Duty as impossible; for want of considering the true Nature of things, and of comparing places of Scripture one with another. For, from what has been already explained, 'tis evident that in that Precept cannot be meant a perfection of degrees, but only a similitude or imitation in kind. The highest



S E R M. attainable perfections of the most excel-

V. lent Creatures in the Universe, are infinitely mean and imperfect in comparison of God, who *chargeth even his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his sight.* How much more weak and of no value, must the best performances of frail, mortal, and sinful Men, of necessity be. But though all that we can possibly do, must needs fall infinitely short of our most perfect pattern, yet we are indispensably obliged to be like it in our proportion, and according to our capacity; and as a finite *can* resemble infinite, so we are to resemble God, by partaking of the same Excellencies in *kind*, though they cannot but be infinitely inferiour in *degree*. A Candle, though its Light bears no proportion at all to the Light of the Sun, yet it resembles it nevertheless in giving Light; whereas Darkness is directly contrary to Both: So the Virtues of Angels and of Men, though they bear no proportion at all to the adorable Perfections of God, yet they resemble them nevertheless in being of the same nature and kind; whereas

Wickedness is in its whole kind a State SERM.  
V.  
of Contrariety, Opposition, and Enmity.

A perfect and most compleat Example is set before us for our imitation, that aiming always at that which is most excellent, we may grow continually, and make a perpetual Progress in the ways of Virtue; and though we can never come up to our pattern itself; yet it is sufficient that we may justly be said to become *like* unto God, when, as the Apostle expresses it, we *are made partakers of the Divine Nature*; and such Imitation of God, as our frail and mortal Nature is capable of, is truly and in a proper sense the comparative Perfection of our *Human Nature*, as absolute Perfection is the Perfection of the *Divine*.

Wickedness is in its whole kind and nature  
of Contrary Opposition, and Humility  
A perfect and most complete Example is  
set before us for our imitation, that al-  
ways as that which is most excel-  
lent, we may grow continually, and make  
a perpetual Progress in the ways of Virtue;  
and though we can never come up to our  
pattern itself, yet it is sufficient that we  
may justly be said to become like unto  
God, when, as the Apostle expresses it  
we are made Partakers of the Divine Na-  
ture; and such Imitation of God as our  
fall and mortal Nature is capable of, is  
justly and in a proper sense the compar-  
ative Perfection of our Human Nature, as  
absolute Perfection is the Perfection of the

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# SERMON VI.

## The Reward of Justice.



LUKE xiv. 14, latter part.

*For thou shalt be recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just.*



THE word, *Just*, in this place, SERM. VI.  
is of the same general import, as *Righteous* or *Virtuous*; expressing, not the performance of a particular Duty, but the habitual Practice of *Virtue* in general. Thus in Other places of Scripture; *Matt. xliii. 49*; *At the end of the World, the Angels shall sever the wicked*



SERM. VI. *ed from among the Just: The meaning is general; They shall separate the Bad from the Good. Again; Gen. vi. 9; Noah was a just man: The sense is; He was a virtuous and religious person, one who feared God and kept his commandments; For so his character is more at large drawn out in the same Verse, Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. In like manner, Heb. xii. 23; Ye are come to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in Heaven,---- to the Spirits of just men made perfect: The meaning is; to the company of all the righteous and good men, who have lived and died in the Fear of God, and in the practice of virtue and true holiness, in all Ages and Nations of the World.*

*THE Reason why Universal Virtue and Goodness, is thus frequently represented under the particular name of Justice, is because Justice is so great, so substantial, so important a part of true Religion, that, by a figure of speech very usual and obvious in numberless other cases, a part so*  
confi-

## The Reward of Justice.

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considerable is easily and naturally put for S E R M.  
the Whole. Religion consists principally VI  
of two Great Branches; the Love of God,  
and of our Neighbour: And as *Loving*  
or *Fearing God*, signifies usually the same  
in general, as being truly religious; be-  
cause whoever has a just Sense of *God* up-  
on his mind, will not easily be prevailed  
upon to do Wrong to *Men*: So being a  
*Just man*, is likewise commonly put for  
being perfectly and entirely religious; be-  
cause whoever so loves Virtue, as to do  
always what is right to *Men*, will not ea-  
sily be defective in his regards to *God*, the  
Supreme Lover and Encourager of all  
Righteousness and Virtue.

I SHALL consider the word at this  
time in its *proper* and limited Sense, as it  
signifies more peculiarly our Duty of doing  
Right to *Men*, or dealing *justly and equi-  
tably* with each other. And in treating  
upon this Subject, I shall, *first*, describe the  
*Nature* of this virtue of Justice, the *Par-  
ticulars* in which it consists, and the  
*Bounds* to which its obligation extends.  
*Secondly*, I shall consider the *Necessity* of the

I 4

Practice

SERM. VI. Practice of this virtue, the *Benefits* thence naturally arising to Mankind, and the *Folly and Mischief of Iniquity*. And *Thirdly*, I shall set forth the particular *Reward* promised to this Virtue from God; The *Resurrection unto Life* being in Scripture described emphatically as the *property* of *Just Men*, and it being stiled *Their* resurrection; so that even to those who shall be rewarded for *Other* virtues, the Promise is, that they shall be recompensed at the *Resurrection of the Just*. In the

I. *First* place, I shall briefly describe the *Nature* of this virtue of Justice, the *Particulars* in which it consists, and the *Bounds* to which its obligation extends. The general and most constant exercise of this Virtue, is in mens *private dealings* with each other in the common Affairs of Life: In which, the Great Rule of Practice, is That Noble Maxim, founded in the eternal Reason of Things, and in the universal Benefit of Mankind, and enforced moreover by Our Saviour as a fundamental Doctrine of the Gospel; *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto You, e-*

ven



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ven so do unto Them; for This (says he) SERM.  
VI.  
*is the Law and the Prophets.* The Acts

by which this great Rule is transgressed in the common affairs of Private life, are all sorts of *Fraud*, and *Cheating*, all *Deceit* and *over-reaching* each other in matters of *Traffick* or *Bargaining*: Concerning which the Scripture declares, that *a false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just Weight is his Delight*; Prov. xi.

1. Under the same denomination comes all *Oppression*, *Extortion*, and Making unreasonable *Advantage* of the *Necessities* of those we deal with: All *Assistance* or *Encouragement* given to *Others*, directly or indirectly, to do wrong: Also *Neglecting* to pay just *Debts*; keeping back the *Wages* of the *Poor* which they have earned by their *Labour*; and every thing of the like kind: Concerning which, God declares by the prophet, Jer. xxii. 13; *Wo unto him that buildeth his house by Unrighteousness, and his Chambers by wrong; that uses his neighbour's Service without Wages, and giveth him not for his work*: And 'tis with great and eloquent Earnestness, that  
*Job*



S E R M. *Job* expresses his Sense of This part of  
 VI. true religion, ch. xxxi. 13, 14, 16; If I  
 despised the cause of my man-servant or  
 of my maid-servant, when they contended  
 with me; If I have withheld the poor  
 from their Desire, or have caused the eye  
 of the Widow to fail; What then shall I  
 do, when God riseth up? And when he vi-  
 siteth, what shall I answer him? All these  
 and the like Instances of private Injustice,  
 are indeed the very same Sin, as despoil-  
 ing men of their Properties by Force or  
 Robbery. For fraudulently with-holding  
 from Another his just Due, is only in a  
 different manner the very same thing, as  
 taking from him by Violence his present  
 proper Possession. And if at any time  
 any of these things be done under the  
 colour of Law, or in such manner as to  
 evade humane Laws; yet the Crime is not  
 thereby the less, but in reality the greater;  
 because then to the Sin of Injustice there  
 is an Aggravation added, in perverting the  
 Means by which Publick Justice should be  
 preserved among Men. Likewise, when  
 Any Wrong of this kind is committed in

Breach

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*Breach of Trust*, by Such as are *any way* S E R M  
*intrusted* with the Affairs of Others; how- VI  
ever *humane Laws* may be *less severe*, and  
make it *more difficult* to punish them; yet  
in *Conscience*, and in the *Sight of God*,  
it is truly an *Increase* and *Aggravation* of  
the *Guilt*, as being a *double Injustice*. Now  
in *Great* and *Plain* Instances, the *natural*  
*sense* indeed of every man's own *Mind*,  
*necessarily* makes him detest and abhor  
the Acts of unrighteousness of This sort:  
But the principal caution needful there-  
fore to be given in This matter, is, that  
All persons would carefully beware of the  
*first Beginnings* of Injustice, and of being  
tempted to wrong their neighbours in  
*small things*, which they may perhaps  
very erroneously look upon as of no great  
importance. For generally 'tis by being  
seduced at first into such smaller transgres-  
sions, that men become hardened by de-  
grees, 'till at length they run into the  
greatest and most Capital Offences. But  
to proceed: For the same reasons that Jus-  
tice and Equity are Duties necessary to  
be performed *at all*; 'tis necessary like-  
wise,

SERM. VI. wise, that where-ever there has been any failure in the practice of these Duties, there *Restitution* must be made to the persons that have been wronged. For true Repentance includes necessarily a sincere Desire, that the Crime had never been committed at all; and the only possible Evidence of the Sincerity of That Desire, is Undoing the Action, where the Nature of the Thing permits, in reality and by Effects: *If the wicked restore the pledge, Ezek. xxxiii. 15, and give again That he had robbed, then he shall surely live, saith the Lord.* Further: Whoever is sincerely desirous to avoid any Crime, must be careful to avoid also the *Temptations* that naturally lead to it: And therefore He who would not be tempted to *defraud Others*, must consider that he is obliged by the Duty of Justice to avoid *Idleness*, and to support Himself, if he can, by his Own Labour and Industry: *Eph. iv. 28; Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to Him that needeth.* Lastly; Under the Duty

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Duty of private Justice between man and S. B. R. R. man, the Scripture comprehends also *Charitableness*, or *Doing good to the Poor*, M. according to the proportion of mens several Abilities. (The reason is, because, in the Scripture-account and estimation of things, great *Uncharitableness* is a sort of *defrauding the Poor* of the Means by which God intended they should be supported: *Prov. iii. 27. With-hold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* And even in my Text itself, the word *Just*, seems to be more especially applied to persons good and charitable. *Thou shalt be blessed*, says our Lord; *for they (the poor) cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the Just.* And not only *charitableness to the poor*, but in general *All kinds of equitable and merciful proceedings whatsoever*, are in Scripture-language included under the Notion of *Justice*: *Matt. i. 19; Joseph was a Just*, that is, a *compassionate* man, unwilling to expose needlessly even one whom he thought a *Guilty person*, to *Reproach*. And



SERMON. And after the same manner of speaking,  
 VI. God's great Goodness and Mercy towards  
 Sinners, is by the Apostle sometimes called  
*The Righteousness of God*; and, *God is not*  
*unrighteous*; (saith he,) *to forget your*  
*works and labour of love*; and, *God is*  
*faithful and just, to forgive us our sins,*  
*and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*  
 These are the principal Instances, to which  
 the Notion of *Justice*, considered in the  
 largest and Scriptural sense of the word,  
 extends in the exercise of it towards par-  
 ticular persons. But there is also further,  
 a Duty of *Justice* towards the Publick.  
 There is incumbent upon men the very  
 same obligation, not to wrong the Com-  
 munity; as there is, not to violate any pri-  
 vate man's Right, or defraud any particu-  
 lar person of his Property. The only  
 reason, why men are not always suffi-  
 ciently sensible of This, so that Many, who  
 are very Just in their Dealings between  
 Man and Man, will yet be very fraudu-  
 lent or rapacious with regard to the Pub-  
 lick; is because, in this latter case, 'tis not  
 so obviously and immediately apparent up-  
 on

on Whom the injury falls, as it is in the *SEVENTH*  
case of *Private Wrongs*. But so long as *VI*  
the Injury is clear and certain, the *Uncer-*  
*tainty* of the persons upon whom the In-  
jury falls in particular, or the *Number* of  
the persons among whom the Damage  
may chance to be divided, alters not at  
all the nature of the Crime itself. And  
though Injuries of this kind, in *smaller*  
cases, are not perhaps immediately felt  
and complained of, yet when the Publick  
comes to be wronged by Persons of large  
and extensive Power, then not only the  
Crime itself, but the *Effects* of it also be-  
come greater and more apparent, than  
in the case of *private Injustice*. And  
therefore a particular and more emphati-  
cal Command is given upon this occa-  
sion to those entrusted with any degrees  
of Power: *2 Sam. xxiii. 2; The Spirit of*  
*the Lord spake by me, and his word was in*  
*my tongue: The God of Israel said, The*  
*Rock of Israel spake to me: He that ruleth*  
*over men must be just, ruling in the Fear*  
*of God: And he shall be as the Light of*  
*the Morning, when the Sun riseth, even a*  
*Morning*

**SERMON** *Morning without Clouds; as the tender*  
**VI.** *grass springing out of the earth, by clear*  
 *shining after rain. Lastly, there is a Ju-*  
*stice and Equity due, not only to the*  
*Community or Nation, of which we hap-*  
*pen to be a Part; but also to All Man-*  
*kind, as our Fellow-creatures, or (in the*  
*Gospel-style) as being our Neighbours and*  
*Brethren. For God hath made of One*  
*Blood, (Acts xviii. 26,) all Nations of Men,*  
*for to dwell on all the face of the Earth,*  
*and hath determined the Times before ap-*  
*pointed, and the Bounds of their habita-*  
*tion. And 'tis the Duty of every rational*  
*creature, to look upon himself as a part*  
*or member of that One universal Com-*  
*munity; sent into the World by the Great*  
*Author of Nature, to promote (as much*  
*as in Him lies) the publick Good and*  
*Welfare of all his Fellow-creatures: For*  
*no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth*  
*to himself; Rom. xiv. 7. This is That*  
*universal Equity and Benevolence, That*  
*Bond of Perfectness, That Fulfilling of the*  
*Whole Law, which in Scripture is stiled*  
*Loving our Neighbours as ourselves, and*  
*Doing*

## *The Reward of Justice.*

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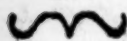
Doing unto *All men as we would they should do unto Us.* This is what our Saviour calls, being *perfect even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* This is imitating of Him, who does Good to *All, and whose tender Mercies are over all his Works.* This is being indeed the children of our Father which is in Heaven, who maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust. The Meaning is, not that in *all* things God deals alike with all men; but that in *Many* degrees and instances, (which is the Glory of a Just and Righteous Administration,) his Goodness, Mercy and Compassion, extends itself even to *All.* Ps. lxxxix. 15; *Righteousness and Equity are the Habitation of his Seat, Mercy and Truth shall go before his Face.* And in the same extensive Sense of the word Justice or Equity, as including every reasonable degree of Benevolence, Mercy and Compassion; is our Saviour likewise, Acts xxii. 14; by way of Eminence stiled *That Just One.*

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AND thus having distinctly described (which was the *First* thing proposed) the *Nature* of this Virtue of Justice, the *Particulars* in which it consists, and the *Bounds* to which its Obligation extends; I proceed Now in the

II. *Second* place, to consider the *Necessity* of the Practice of this Virtue, the *Benefits* thence *naturally* arising to Mankind, and the *Folly* and *Mischief* of every *sort of Iniquity*. And this appears evidently, in the very *Nature* and *Reason* of the thing. For upon the securing of mens Properties, depends all humane Society; and without Justice and Equity, there could be no Commerce or Conversation amongst Men: Nor is there any other possible way, by which Mankind could be distinguished from the wild beasts of the forest, which devour each other according to their Strength, and have No Title or Property in any thing: They would All be in the case which was foretold concerning *Ismael*, Gen. xvi. 12; *His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against Him*. On the contrary:

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rary: Were this virtue of Justice and En- S E R M.  
quiry, Benevolence and Good-Will, uni- VI.  
versally practised amongst Mankind; the 

Benefit of it would be incredibly and inconceivably great: Infomuch that even this present mortal State, would be a sort of Anticipation of that *New Heaven and New Earth*, wherein righteousness is to dwell for ever. The Prophet *Isaiah* gives us a most eloquent description of the Happiness of such a State, in his prediction of the Effect which the universal Prevailing of true Religion and of the Kingdom of the Messiah would produce in the World: *ch. xi. 4; With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the Meek of the Earth; and he shall smite the Earth with the rod of his Mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked: And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and Faithfulness the girdle of his reins: The Wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little*

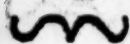
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child

S E R M. *child shall lead them:----- They shall not*

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*hurt nor destroy, in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.* Nay, the Wisest men even

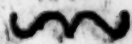
in the *Heathen World itself*, had such a Sense of the exceeding and glorious Happiness, which the universal practice of Righteousness would introduce upon Earth, that the Poets attempted to describe it under the Fiction of the Golden Age: And One of the Best of their Philosophers, speaking of Universal Justice and Equity, as the Top and Perfection of all Virtues, expresses himself in the following manner; that "if This Virtue  
" could be represented visibly to mortal  
" Eyes, it would raise in us an inexpressible Love and Admiration of it;" being in itself so truly beautiful and lovely, that even "the Motions of the heavenly Bodies are not so admirably regular and harmonious, nor the Brightness of the Sun and Stars so ornamental to the visible Fabrick of the World, as the  
" universal Practice of this illustrious

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“Virtue would be conducive to the glory and Happiness of the rational part of this lower creation.” Great therefore and indispensable is the obligation upon all men, to promote the universal Practice of Justice, Righteousness and Equity. So that, were not men strangely and most unnaturally corrupted, by perverse Opinions, and ill Habits, prevailing against the clearest Reason; ’twould be impossible for any man not to be as much ashamed of *Doing Iniquity*, as he is of *Believing Contradictions*. For all *Unrighteousness* is the very same thing in *Action*, as *Falsity* or *Contradiction* is in *Theory*; and the same cause which makes the one *absurd*, makes the other *unreasonable*. To comprise the whole in one word: What the Sun’s forsaking that equal course, which now, by diffusing gentle Warmth and Light, cherishes and invigorates every thing in a due proportion thro’ the whole System; and on the contrary, his burning up, by an irregular and disorderly Motion, some of the Orbs with insupportable Heat, and leaving Others to perish in

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SERM. extreme Cold and Darkness: What This

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(I say) would be to the *natural World*; That very same thing, Injustice and Tyranny, Iniquity and All Wickedness, is to the *Moral and Rational* part of the Creation: Only with This aggravating Difference; that This latter is a *perverse and wilful* depravation, of creatures originally endued with *Knowledge and Liberty*, after the image and similitude of Him that created them.

III. *Thirdly*; HAVING thus shown the *Necessity* of the Practice of Justice among Men, the *Benefits* thence *Naturally* arising to Mankind in the *ordinary and necessary* Consequences of Things, and the *Folly and Mischief* of every sort of *Iniquity*; it remains, in the Third and last place, that I briefly set forth the *particular Reward*, which God himself has moreover, in an *extraordinary* manner, promised in Scripture to the practice of this General and Extensive Virtue. *Prov. iv. 19, 18*; *The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble; But the path of the Just is as the shining*

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shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Again, ch. xxiv. S E R M. VI.

16; A just man falleth seven times, and rises up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief. Some Commentators have been so absurd, as to understand This Text of good mens falling into Sin: But the True Meaning is evidently the same as that of the Psalmist, when he says; *Many are the Afflictions of the righteous,* Pf. xxxiv. *but the Lord delivereth him out of them* 19. xxxvii. *all: Though he fall, he shall not be ut-*

*terly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* Again; *Job xxvii. 13, 16; This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of Oppressors which they shall receive from the Almighty: ----- Though he heap up Silver as the Dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; He may prepare it, but the Just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the Silver: For the Wealth of the Sinner, is laid up for the Just.* Prov. xiii. 22. These

and the like Promises, were very frequently, in the times of the Old Testament, fulfilled literally by God's provi-

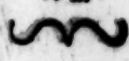
S E R M. dential Disposition of *temporal Blessings.*

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But because, even in *Those* times, they were also often *not fulfilled*, and especially in Times of persecution; I think 'tis therefore very probable, that *even Then* Those Promises (as is evident in the case of *Abraham*) had a secret and implicit Regard to That *future State*, which in the *New Testament* is so *clearly and distinctly* revealed. The Happiness of which future State, is by our Saviour so peculiarly declared to be the *Portion and Property* of *Just men*, that, as I before observed, the *Resurrection unto Life* is in the Text emphatically stiled *Their Resurrection*; so that even to those who shall be rewarded for *Other Virtues*, the Promise is, that they shall be recompensed *at the Resurrection of the Just*. And, in the epistle to the *Hebrews*, That *general Assembly and Church of the first-born in Heaven*, who are joined with the *innumerable company of Angels*, and with *Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant*, and with *God the Judge of All*; are stiled *the Spirits of Just men, made perfect*. And the

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the character given by St Peter to that S E R M.  
*New Heaven and New Earth*, which is VI  
to be the Abode of the Blessed, is, that   
*Therein dwelleth righteousness*; 2 Pet. iii.

13. To which there seems to be a plain  
Allusion, even in the *Old Testament*; Is.  
lx. 18, 21; *Violence shall no more be heard  
in thy land, wasting nor destruction with-  
in thy borders; but thou shalt call thy  
Walls Salvation, and thy Gates Praise:*

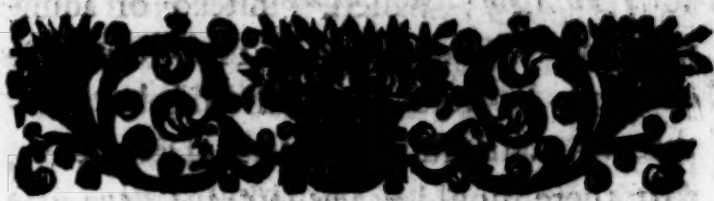
----- *Thy people also shall be all righteous,  
they shall inherit the land for ever.* And,  
(to mention but one observation more,  
with which I shall conclude;) When our  
Saviour was to express in the loftiest and  
most sublime figure, the Joy that is in  
Heaven over a repenting Sinner; the  
highest possible manner in which he could  
express it, was to say it was greater than  
*That over ninety nine Just persons who  
need no repentance.* The Meaning of  
which is not, by any means, that a *con-  
verted Sinner* is really preferred or esteem-  
ed in value before a man who has been  
*always righteous*; but that a *smaller good*,  
when recovered as it were unexpectedly  
and



SERM. and on a sudden, causes greater and more  
 VI. immediate manifestations and expressions  
 of Joy, though not of *settled Esteem*, than  
 a much more valuable Good which has  
 been constantly in possession.

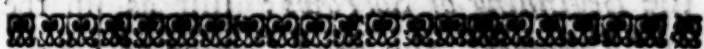


SERMON



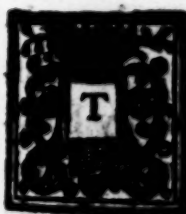
# S E R M O N VII.

The Abounding of Iniquity the  
*Cause* of it's abounding more.



M A T T. xxiv. 12.

*And because Iniquity shall abound, the  
Love of many shall wax cold.*



THESE words are part of that S E R M.  
VII.

brief Prophetical description  
which our Lord gives his Dis-  
ciples of the Future State of  
his Church, from the time of  
his Ascension till his final Coming to Judg-  
ment. The *Occasion* of This Discourse,  
was his Disciples showing him the Beauti-  
ful and Stately Buildings of the Temple  
at

SERM. at *Jerusalem*; which, (instead of admiring and commending, as They seemed to expect,) he told them should be overthrown with such an utter Destruction, that there should *not be left one stone upon another, that should not be thrown down.* And hence it is, that, through the whole following Prophecy, he describes the Misery of all succeeding Ages, until his *Second Coming*, in phrases borrowed from That destruction of *Judæa*, which was the *Beginning of Sorrows*: Just as, in the *Old Testament*, the *First Coming* of Christ, and the Establishment of his Religion, had been described in phrases continually alluding to the then typical state of the *Jewish Church and Nation.*

THE *Design* of this Prophecy throughout, is to withdraw the Minds of the Disciples from Expectations of Worldly Power and Prosperity: To forewarn them of the numerous Calamities which should come upon *Mankind in general* from the righteous Judgment of God, and upon *his own Disciples in particular* from the manifold Wickedness and Unreasonableness of *Men;*

*the Cause of it's abounding more.* 141

Men; from the Persecutions, Cruelty, and S E R M.  
open Violence of *Infidels*; and from the VII  
Treachery, Deceits, and Frauds of pro-  
fessed *Believers*; from the Opposition  
which should in all Ages be made to  
Christ's Religion, by those who *received it*  
*not*; and from the prodigious Corruptions  
which should be introduced into it, by  
those who pretended to *embrace it*. That  
therefore the true Disciples of Christ, men  
of real *Virtue and Integrity*, in all Ages  
and Nations, must *in their Patience pos-*  
*sess their Souls*; Luk. xxi. 19: That is,  
must be content, *by patient continuance in*  
*well-doing here, to seek for glory and ho-*  
*nour and immortality hereafter.*

THIS is the plain Design of our Lord's  
prophetick Discourse through this whole  
chapter. And 'tis very remarkable con-  
cerning This and all the Other Prophecies  
in the *New Testament*, as one intrinsic  
character or mark of the Truth and divine  
Authority of the whole; that whereas  
Impostors always, and Enthusiasts general-  
ly, in setting up any New Doctrine, make  
it their Business to raise the Expectation  
of



S E R M. of their Followers, and to flatter their  
 VII. Imaginations with Promises of great Success, and of God's interposing in some extraordinary manner to bring into their hands the Power and Dominion of this present World; our Lord's Promises, on the contrary, are all of a spiritual nature; Promises of a proper Reward for Virtue, in a future and heavenly state: But that, at present, what his true Disciples had to expect, was *Persecution and Sufferings* of all kinds: *They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you,* ver. 9; *and ye shall be hated of all Nations for my Name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And there shall be great Tribulation,* ver. 21; *such as was not since the beginning of the World to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* Nay, what is still more remarkable, and more essentially contrary to the Spirit both of Imposture and Enthusiasm; he foretels the greatest and most extensive and most lasting *Corruptions* of his Own Religion. Ver. 24; *There shall arise false*  
*Christi*

*the Cause of it's abounding more.*

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*Christs and false Propbets, and shall shew* S E R M.  
VII.  
*great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that*  
*(if it were possible) they shall deceive the*

*very Elect: That is, Teachers of false*  
*Doctrine shall arise, supported with Pow-*  
*er, and Numbers, and Pretences of An-*  
*tiquity and of Miracles, and Universality,*  
*and Infallibility, and all other imaginable*  
*Marks of the True Church; except That*  
*One which is the Only True one, the*  
*Teaching of the same doctrine without*  
*alteration, that Christ himself taught.*  
*And his Apostles after him, unanimously*  
*foretel the same Events. St Peter, in his*  
*second Epistle, ch. iii. 3; Knowing this*  
*first, says he, that there shall come in the*  
*last days Scoffers, walking after their own*  
*Lusts, and saying, Where is the Promise of*  
*his Coming? And St Paul, in his first E-*  
*pistle to Timothy, ch. iv. 1; The Spirit*  
*speaketh expressly, that in the latter times*

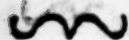
*Some shall depart from the Faith, giving*  
*heed to seducing Spirits, and doctrines of*  
*\* Devils; Speaking Lies in hypocrisy; ha-*  
*ving their Conscience seared with a hot*  
*iron; Forbidding to marry, and command-*

\* Doctrines  
of Demons,  
Doctrines a-  
bout Souls  
departed, In-  
vocations of  
Saints, Pray-  
ing of Souls  
out of Purga-  
tory, and the  
like.

*ing*

SERM.

VII.



ing to abstain from Meats, which God hath created to be received with Transgiving of Them who believe and know the Truth. And 2 Tim. iii. 1; This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come: For men shall be Lovers of their own Selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof.

THE Occasions and Reasons of these great and manifold Corruptions, are as various as the Corruptions themselves. One in particular, is what our Lord takes notice of in the Text; that *Wickedness* is, in its nature, apt to spread and propagate itself. Not only because evil men and seducers (as St Paul expresses it) are apt to grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, and continually increasing unto more ungodliness; but moreover because even Those who are well-disposed, are too often

*the Cause of it's abounding more.* 145

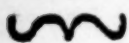
often either drawn aside by the Example, SERM.  
or wearied out by the Opposition of a vi- VII.  
cious and corrupt World. *Because Ini-*  
*quity shall abound, the Love of Many shall*  
*wax cold.*

IN discoursing more particularly upon which words, I shall observe, 1<sup>st</sup>, the *Supposition* our Lord here lays down as certain, that the World *will* generally be very wicked; and that, notwithstanding all the means which God has thought fit to make use of even in this last dispensation of the Gospel, still *Iniquity shall* continue and *abound.* 2<sup>dly</sup>; I shall consider how very naturally, among *Other* causes of Corruption, even *This* very thing, the *abounding of Iniquity*, is *itself* a proper and direct Cause of its *increasing* and *abounding more*: *Because Iniquity shall abound*, therefore *the Love Many of shall wax cold.* 3<sup>dly</sup>; I shall show, that though in fact it *is* so, yet in Truth and Reason there is no real Ground or Foundation why it *should* be so; Nor is it any just Excuse for any man's Wick- edness, that Others have been wicked be- fore him. 4<sup>thly</sup>, and in the *last* place; I

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S E R M. shall draw some *Practical Inferences* from  
 VII. the Whole of what has been said.



I. *First*; OUR Lord here lays down the *Supposition* as certain, that the World generally *will* be wicked; and that, notwithstanding all the means which God has thought fit to make use of even in this Last Dispensation of the Gospel, still *Iniquity shall* continue and *abound*. The Wickedness of the World, that is, the *Unreasonable* Behaviour of men naturally endued with *Reason*; has continually been matter of Complaint, in all Ages and in all Nations, among considerate persons even in the *Heathen* World. In the *Sacred Writings*, the Corruption of Manners in the *Ages before the Flood*, is Thus described, Gen. vi. 5; *God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great in the Earth, and that every imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only Evil continually*. In Solomon's time, the Description That Wise Observer gives of the State of Mankind, is This: Eccles. i. 14; *I have seen all the Works that are done under the Sun; and behold,-----that which is crooked cannot be made*

*the Cause of it's abounding more.* 147

*made straight, and that which is wanting* SERM.  
*cannot be numbred: That is; Men's De-* VII.  
*fects in what is Good, are innumerable;*  
*and their Practices of what is Ill, are in-*  
*corrigible. In the times of the Apocry-*  
*phal Books, the expectation of what was*  
*to come, is Thus expressed; 2 Esdr. v. 2,*  
*10; and xv. 6; Iniquity shall be increased*  
*above that which thou now seest, or that*  
*thou hast heard long ago. Understanding*  
*shall be sought of Many, and yet not be*  
*found; then shall unrighteousness and in-*  
*continency be multiplied upon Earth. For*  
*Wickedness has exceedingly polluted the*  
*whole Earth, and their hurtful Works are*  
*fulfilled. And in the times under the*  
*New Testament, whatever Expectations*  
*many of the Disciples might flatter them-*  
*selves withal; yet our Lord very plainly*  
*and expressly, both in this whole chapter*  
*and upon many Other Occasions, assures*  
*them that Offences will come; that Ini-*  
*quity shall long prevail upon Earth; that*  
*particularly upon his own Disciples should*  
*fall Many and Long Tribulations, both by*  
*means of Persecution from Unbelievers,*

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and

SERMON. and by means of Great and Lasting Cor-  
 VII. *ruptions* which should arise among *Them-*  
 selves; That all these things *must needs*  
 be; and that therefore men ought not to  
 be *surprized* when they find them come  
 to pass, forasmuch as he had plainly told  
 them of these things *beforehand*, and warn-  
 ed them that in their *Patience* they must  
*possess* their *Souls*. This, in *Fact*, is too  
 plainly the Case. But the particular *Rea-*  
*sons* why the unerring Wisdom of God  
 thinks fit to *permit* it thus to be, are what  
*We* who live in so *small* a portion of *Time*  
 and *Place*, and have *Capacities* propor-  
 tional only to this present State, shall not  
 perhaps be fully acquainted with, till the  
 great and final day of Accounts. *This*  
 only, *in general*, we know by the *Light*  
*of Nature and Reason*; that men being  
 endued with *Liberty of Will*, and being  
*frail and fallible*, and subject to many  
*Temptations*; it cannot, morally speaking,  
 come to pass otherwise, but that Great  
 Numbers will always be governed by their  
*Passions* more than by their *Reason*; which  
 is the essence of All Wickedness. And by

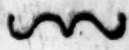
*the Cause of it's abounding more.* 149

*Revelation* we are assured further, in particular; that *One reason* why these things must needs be, that is, why God does not think fit to interpose by his Supreme Power to hinder their being; is, that *Many* may be purified, and made white, and tried; and that *They that are approved,* may be made manifest. And This concerning the *Supposition* our Lord here lays down as certain; that, in fact, *Iniquity* will continue and abound.

II. Secondly; I am to consider how very naturally, among Other Causes of Corruption, even *This* very thing, the *abounding of Iniquity*, is itself a proper and direct Cause of its *increasing and Abounding more*. Our Lord, in his Parable of the Ten Virgins, observes, that *while the Bridegroom tarried, they all, (the Wise, as well as the Foolish,) slumbered and slept.* The *Wise* were not so watchful as they ought to have been, to be ready always against their Lord's Coming; but their Lamps wanted trimming: And the *Foolish*, let *Their* go quite out. From This *Negligence*, a man easily proceeds by de-



SERM. grees to think within himself, like that  
 VII. *wicked Servant* in the Gospel; *my Lord*  
 delayeth *his Coming*: And thereupon he  
 becomes *tyrannical* to his *Fellow-servants*,  
 and *begins to eat and drink with the drunken*. Having gone on in which Course for  
 some time, and found himself to prosper  
 in his Vices; he concludes at length, that  
 his Lord will not come *at all*; that the  
 Threatnings of God are but empty Ter-  
 rours, and that there is no such thing as  
 a *Day of Judgment*. A *Succession* of Wick-  
 ed men, seeing One *Age* pass quietly on  
 after another, and that the World goes on  
 after the same manner *from generation to*  
*generation*; confirm themselves still *more*  
*and more* in their Hopes of Impunity, by  
 This consideration; saying, *Where is the*  
*Promise of his Coming?* *for since the Fa-*  
*thers fell asleep, all things continue as they*  
*were from the Beginning of the Creation*.  
 Besides; Wicked men, not only escaping  
 frequently with impunity, but Sometimes  
 (and not unusually too) arriving at the  
 highest degrees of *Power and Prosperity*  
 in the World; furnish inconsiderate per-  
 sons

sons with continual Arguments against the S E R M.  
 Divine Providence; with such Arguments VII.  
 as caused even the Psalmist himself to say,   
 Pf. lxxiii. 2; *My feet were almost gone, my*  
*Treadings had well-nigh slipt: Because I*  
*was grieved at the wicked, I do also see*  
*the ungodly in such Prosperity.* And the  
 Prophet *Jeremy*, ch. xii. 1; *Wherefore doth*  
*the way of the Wicked prosper? wherefore*  
*are all they happy, that deal very treache-*  
*rously?* Then further; the very *Shame*  
 of not following the *Fashion* of a corrupt  
*World*, in times of great degeneracy, with-  
 draws Many from their Duty, from their  
 Adherence to Truth and Virtue, and se-  
 duces them into mean and unworthy Com-  
 pliances. Concerning which, the Son of  
*Sirach* speaks, Ecclus. iv. 21; *There is a*  
*Shame, that bringeth Sin:---- Accept no*  
*person against thy Soul, and let not the Re-*  
*verence of any man cause thee to fall.* But  
 what our Lord seems principally to intend  
 here in the Text, is to admonish and fore-  
 warn his Disciples, that men would be  
 discouraged and wearied out by degrees in  
 their Concern for Religion, by the vari-

S E R M. ous sorts of *Persecution* they should meet

VII. with from *Unbelievers*, and by the yet  
 more strange *Corruptions* that should by  
 Christians be introduced among *Them-*  
*selves*. In the Parable of the Sower, Matt.  
 xiii. 20, he describes *Some* persons, as  
 hearing the word, and anon with joy re-  
 ceiving it; yet not having root in them-  
 selves, but during for a while: For when  
*Tribulation* or *Persecution* ariseth because  
 of the Word, by and by they are offended.  
 That is, as he expressees it in the words  
 before my Text, ver. 9; When they shall  
 deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill  
 you, and ye shall be hated of all Nations  
 for my Name's sake; Then shall Many be  
 offended, and shall betray one another, —  
 and the Love of many shall wax cold. But  
 the Other, and (as I said) still greater  
 and more strange Cause of the Same Ef-  
 fect, is, the *Corruptions* our Lord foretells  
 should be introduced among the *Professors*  
*Themselves* of his Own Religion; Many  
 false Prophets shall arise, and shall deceive  
 Many, And because, by This means like-  
 wise, *Iniquity* shall abound; therefore  
 (says

*the Cause of it's abounding more.* † 53

(says he) *the Love of Many shall wax* SERM.  
*cold.* There shall arise persons (as St Paul VII.  
at large describes them, 2 *Thess.* ii. 10,)   
*with all possible deceivableness of Unrighteousness.* That is: They shall have all  
*possible Marks and Notes,* of the True  
Church of Christ; excepting *That Alone,*  
without which all other Marks are no-  
thing; namely, the uncorrupt *Worship* of  
the *One True God of the Universe,* and the  
real Practice of universal *Equity and Good-*  
*ness towards Men.* All Other Signs and  
Wonders, being consistent with *idolatrous*  
and with *unrighteous Practices,* are but so  
many different Methods of *Deceit;* of  
*teaching,* for *Commandments of God,* the  
*Doctrines of Men;* leaving the plain *Found-*  
*ation of Christ,* and introducing into Re-  
ligion matters of *doubtful disputation,* mat-  
ters which *gender Strife and Contention,*  
Doctrines either impossible or difficult to  
be *understood,* and *Practices* either directly  
*unlawful,* or extremely *suspicious;* Which  
can be supported only by *Force and Vio-*  
*lence,* by Means essentially inconsistent with  
the very *Nature and Being of Religion.*  
The



S E R M. VII. The natural Consequence of all which things must needs be, that men will be led to look upon Religion in general as a mere Fiction, or at least as a thing uncertain and above Their Capacities to understand; about which consequently it cannot possibly be Their Duty to have any Concern. Thus the *abounding of Iniquity*, is *itself* a proper and direct Cause, of its *increasing and abounding more*.

BUT though, in *Fact*, it is so; yet in *Truth and Reason*, (which is what I proposed to show in the *Third* place,)

III. THERE is no real Ground or Foundation why it *should* be so; Nor is it any just Excuse for any man's Wickedness, that Others have been Wicked before him. The *Nature of Things* is not altered by the *Opinions of Men*, much less by the *Practices* of the vicious and corrupt part of the World. There is such a thing as *Truth and Right*, founded in the *Nature of Things* and in the *Will of God*; and there is such a thing as *Reason*, or a Power of unprejudiced *Attention* implanted in Men, by which they are enabled

bled to find it out: Which is what our SERM.  
Saviour calls, *having Ears to hear.* To be VII.

led into Wickedness by the *Shame* of being *unfashionable*, and by the Influence of *Great Examples*; is directly *esteeming the Praise of Men*, more than the *Praise of God*. To be shocked at the present *Prosperity* of the *Wicked*, is to forget the first Principle and Foundation of the Doctrine of Christ, that *God hath appointed a Day hereafter, wherein he will judge the World in righteousness.* To be disturbed at things going on in the same manner from generation to generation, as if our *Lord delayed his Coming*; is to be ignorant that *one day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*; and that, in due season, *he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* To be offended and think *strange* of the *Persecutions* and *Discouragements*, which at different times and in different manners fall upon good men; is to be insensible of the repeated Declarations of our Saviour, that these things *must* needs be; that whosoever *will be His Disciple, must* (in some degree or other) *take up*

SERM.  
VII.

*up his Cross and follow Him. For in a corrupt World, All (as St Paul expresses it) that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution; (shall meet at least with many Reproaches, Inconveniencies, and Discouragements, upon account of their adherence to Truth and Right;) 2 Tim. iii. 12. Lastly, To be shaken and unsettled, upon account of the High Pretensions of different Doctrines, and matters of Dispute in Religion; is likewise being unattentive to the express Prediction and Caution of our Saviour, Matt. xxiv. 25; Behold, saith he, I have told you before: There shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall show great Signs and Wonders: ----- Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, behold, he is in the Desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the Secret chambers; believe it not. His Meaning is: The True Doctrine of Christ, the Everlasting Gospel, is very plain even to the meanest Capacities; consisting in the Worship of the One True God, which is the First and Great Commandment; and in the Practice of universal Equity and Good-will towards Men,*

*the Cause of it's abounding more.* 157

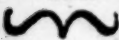
Men, which is the *Second* and *Like unto* SERM.  
it. If any man will do his Will, that is, VII.  
will be *honest and sincere*, he shall easily know  
of *This Doctrine*, that it is of God. For  
the *Foundation of God standeth sure*, ha-  
ving *This Seal*; Let every one that nameth  
the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity.

IV. *Fourthly*; THE Inferences from what  
has been said, are briefly as follows.

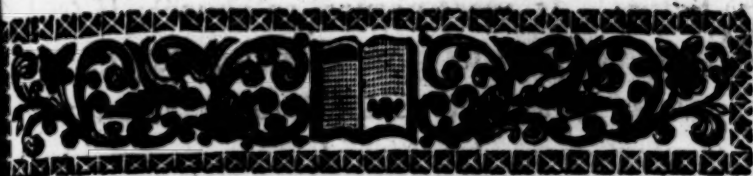
1st; FROM hence it clearly appears, how  
absurdly those of the Church of Rome,  
instead of attending to the intrinsick Na-  
ture of the *Doctrine*, and to the real Evi-  
dence of the *Facts*, alledge Temporal  
Grandour, and Power, and Authority,  
and Visibilty, and Universality of Extent,  
and the like, as Marks of *Truth* in mat-  
ters of Religion; directly contrary to the  
whole Tenour of our Saviour's Discourse,  
both in *This Chapter*, and through the  
Whole Gospel.

2dly; ANOTHER proper Inference from  
what has been said, is That which our  
Lord himself drew from This Discourse  
to his Disciples, as recorded by St Luke,  
ch. xxi. 19; *In your Patience possess ye your*  
Souls.



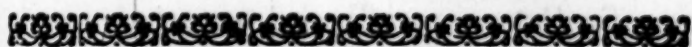
SERM. Souls. A good Christian, a man that will  
VII.  persist in his adherence to Truth and Vir-  
tue, must be content, in the midst of a  
vicious and corrupt World, by patient  
*continuance in well-doing to seek for glory,  
and honour, and immortality. We must  
submit to follow the Example of Christ:  
Considering Him (as the Apostle admo-  
nishes, Heb. xii. 3,) who endured such  
contradiction of Sinners against Himself;  
lest we be wearied and faint in our Minds.*





# SERMON VIII.

The Wickedness of Christians no  
Argument against Christianity.



GAL. ii. 17.

*But if, while we seek to be justified by  
Christ, we ourselves also are found Sin-  
ners; is therefore Christ the Minister of  
Sin? God forbid.*

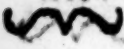


NE of the greatest and most S E R M.  
VIII.  
plausible Objections alledged  
by Unbelievers against the di-  
vine Institution of the Chri-  
stian Religion; is the small-  
ness of the influence it may seem to have,  
upon

S E R M. upon the Lives and Manners of its Pro-  
 VIII. fessors. It were natural to expect, if God  
 w condescended to give men an *express re-  
 vealed Law*, and to send so extraordinary  
 a person as his *own Son* to promulgate  
 That Law upon Earth; it were natural  
 to expect, it should have some very vi-  
 sible and remarkable *Effect* in the World,  
 answerable to the *Dignity* of the *Thing*  
 itself, and worthy of its *Great Author*.  
 They who were blessed with such *singu-  
 lar Advantages*, *What manner of persons*  
 (as *St Peter* expresses it) *ought they to be,*  
*in all holy conversation and godliness?* And,  
*are there then* (will Unbelievers be apt to  
 say;) *are there to be met withal,* in the  
 Lives and Manners of Christians, any con-  
 siderable Marks or distinguishing Charac-  
 ters, by which it might be judged that  
 they are really under the Influence and  
 peculiar Guidance of such a divine Di-  
 rector? Is there, among those who call  
 themselves Christians, less of profaneness  
 and impiety towards God, less of Fraud,  
 injustice and unrighteousness towards  
 Men, than among the Professors of other  
 Reli-

Religions? Is there not too plainly the same boundless *Ambition*, the same insatiable *Covetousness*, the same *Voluptuousness* and *Debauchery* of *Manners*, to be found among *Them*, as among *Other* men? Nay, have not moreover the Pretences even of *Religion* itself, been the immediate and direct Occasion of the bitterest and most implacable *Animosities*, of the cruellest and most bloody *Wars*, of the most barbarous and inhuman *Persecutions*? Have not the greatest *Vices* and *Immoralities* of all kinds, received too plain an Encouragement, from the reliance upon a Power of repeating continually certain regular and periodical *Absolutions*; and, much more, from an imagination that the Practices of a vicious life may be compensated before God by the Observance of certain weak and ridiculous *Ceremonies*, and made amends for by *Superstitious Commutations*? Lastly, and beyond all this, hath not even the *Grace of God*, as the Apostle expresses it, been itself too frequently turned into wantonness? That is: Hath not the great and fundamental Grace of the Gos-



S E R M. pel, the gracious Promise of Pardon upon true Repentance and Amendment, been  
 VIII.  itself abused into an Encouragement of Wicked Living, in a dependence upon the Formalities of a Death-bed Repentance? Very great, and very just Reproaches indeed are these, upon Many who profess themselves to be *Followers of Christ*. But that such Objections have no conclusive consequence at all, against *Christianity itself*, is what the Apostle, after a very affectionate manner, declares in the words of the Text: *If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found Sinners; is therefore Christ the Minister of Sin? God forbid: For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor: If Christianity be made a Support, to That which it was ultimately and essentially intended to destroy; 'tis no longer Christianity, but a wicked and inconsistent Abuse of that Sacred Name and Character.*

IN discoursing therefore upon these words, I shall endeavour to show, *1st*, That the Wickedness of the Lives of those who

who call themselves Christians, is no Ar- SERM.  
gument at all against the Truth and Ex- VIII.  
cellency of the Christian Religion itself. 

2dly, That the Practice however of Any wickedness, though it afford no real Argument against Christianity itself, yet is Matter of very great and just Reproach to the Professors of this Holy Religion, as being the utmost Contradiction and the highest possible Inconsistency with their Profession. 3dly, That hence consequently we have a very plain and easy Rule, to judge of the Malignity and Dangeroufness of Any Errour in matters of Religion: In proportion as the Errour tends to reconcile Any Vicious Practice with the Profession of Religion, or (as the Text expresses it) to make *Christ the Minister of Sin*; in the same proportion is the *Doctrine* pernicious, and the *Teachers* of it justly to be deemed Corrupt.

I. *First*; THE Wickedness of the Lives of Those who call themselves Christians, is No Argument at all against the Truth and Excellency of the Christian Religion itself. *Natural and Necessary Causes*, al-

S E R M. ways and necessarily produce *Effects* proportional to their natural Powers; so that from the Degree or Quantity of the *Effect*, may always certainly be judged the degree of Power and Efficacy in the *Cause*. But in *Moral Causes*, the *Cause* is necessarily and essentially otherwise. In *These*, how efficacious soever the *Cause* be, yet the *Effect* always depends on the *Will* of the person, upon whom the *Effect* is to be worked, whether the *Cause* shall at all produce its *proper Effect*, or no. The Christian Religion affords men the most Perfect *Instructions* possible, in the ways of *Virtue*; and *Arguments* infinitely strong, to enforce the *Practice* of it. The *Effect* of this doctrine upon the *Lives* of men, in the *Primitive* times, before *Worldly* corruptions entred into the Church; was very great and conspicuous. And, if *We* understand the *Prophecies* rightly, which relate to things yet to come; this *Effect* will be still much more remarkable, in the *Latter Ages*; when the *Corruptions*, which Now prevail among *Christians*, shall be reformed; and the

Earth

*Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the* SERM.  
*Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.* As VIII.

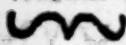
things at present stand, there are great Numbers of men, many more than are taken notice of in the Noise and Hurry of the most Busy part of the World ; who, upon the Foundation of a firm and well-settled Belief in the Gospel of Christ, go on regularly and constantly in the course of a sober, honest, and virtuous life ; with a perpetual uniform sense of God upon their Minds, and an assured expectation of a future judgment. And even among Those who value themselves upon *despising* the assistance of *Revelation*, and rely entirely upon their own natural Abilities in matters of Religion ; 'tis very plain, that the greatest part of those right Notions concerning God and Virtue, about which they can now so readily and so clearly discourse, are really almost wholly borrowed from the Light of *That Revelation*, which they are desirous should be thought entirely needless. This, I say, is very plain and evident, from the extreme Darkeness and Ignorance where-



SERM. with the *Heathen World* is universally o-  
 VIII. verspread, notwithstanding there are not  
 wanting among them men of excellent  
 natural Abilities; and from the right No-  
 tions of God and Virtue to be found a-  
 mong *Christians*, in Numbers of persons  
 even of the lowest capacities and of the  
 meanest Employments, to a degree which  
 Few, exceeding Few, even of the greatest  
 and most eminent *Philosophers*, were ever  
 able to arrive at. So very different a thing  
 is it, to see and discern the Reasonable-  
 ness of Moral Obligations, *after* they  
 have been once clearly revealed; and to  
 be able, without any assistance, to dis-  
 cover *at first*, the same Obligations, by  
 the mere Strength of Nature and Reason.  
 But however This be; and supposing the  
*Effect* of Christianity in the World, had  
 been much smaller than it has been;  
 still, I say, This would be no argument  
 at all against the Truth and Excellency of  
 the Doctrine itself; because, (as I now  
 observed,) in all *Moral* Causes, it does and  
 must always depend on the *Will* of the  
 person, upon whom the Effect is to be  
 worked,

worked, whether even the most powerful S E R M.  
 and efficacious Cause shall at all produce V N I.  
 its proper *Effect*, or No. When God him-  
 self calls men, in the strongest and most  
 efficacious manner that is consistent with  
 his calling them at all, 'tis still in their  
 own power, not to hearken to that Call,  
 not to be in any respect the better for it,  
 nay, to be the worse for it, much worse  
 than if they had never known the way of  
*Righteousness*. For as, where no Law is,  
 there is no *Transgression*; so on the other  
 side, and for the same reason, where there  
 is a Law, not obeyed, That Law worketh  
*wrath*; and Sin, by this commandment, be-  
 comes exceeding sinful. Were therefore  
 the *Effect* always to be the Measure, in  
 judging of the Goodness and Excellency  
 of a Cause; the best and wisest Laws  
 would often, upon account of their very  
 Excellency, be the worst. The Law of  
 God, would be chargeable with the Ma-  
 lignity of Sin; and God himself, as the  
 real and immediate Author of Evil. Rom.  
 vii. 10; The commandment which was or-  
 dained to life, I found to be unto Death:

SERM. For Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me:-----  
VIII.



*Working Death in me by that which is good; that Sin, by the commandment, might become exceeding sinful. And the same may, in proportion, be said concerning Reason itself, even the absolute and necessary Reason of Things. The more we are sensible of the reasonableness and necessity of Moral Obligations, the worse is our condition if we act unreasonably. Yet Reason is of essential Excellency, eternally and immutably; being the necessary Result of the Nature and Truth of Things: And the Commandments of God who cannot err, are always Holy and Just and Good; Rom. vii. 12. If therefore it be no Objection against the Excellency of Reason itself, that it very often is not able to make men act reasonably; and no diminution to the Divine Commandments in general, that they frequently not only fail of reforming mens Manners, but even on the contrary do moreover make Sin to become the more exceedingly sinful: then, for the same reason, neither against the*  
Truth

Truth and Excellency of *Christianity* in SERM. VIII.  
*particular* can any Argument be drawn,  
from the Wickedness of the Lives of  
Those who profess themselves Christians.  
But

II. *Secondly*; THOUGH the Practice  
of *Any Wickedness* whatsoever, affords no  
real Argument against *Christianity* itself;  
yet 'tis always matter of very great and  
just Reproach to the *Professors* of this *Ho-  
ly Religion*, as being the utmost contra-  
diction and the highest possible Inconsis-  
tency with their Profession. The *Design*  
and *End* of Christ's Religion, is to *amend*  
and *reform* the Manners of Men; that he  
might *purify to himself a peculiar people,*  
*zealous of good Works*; a people, who might  
*shine as Lights* in the World, by the *exem-  
plary Practice* of all *Virtue and Goodness*.  
Every *Vice*, that any *Christian* is guilty of,  
has a tendency to defeat this great End; and  
brings dishonour upon the Name, and upon  
the Religion of Christ. For whenever Chri-  
stians appear wicked and corrupt in their  
manners, *the Name of God is blasphemed*  
*among the Gentiles, through Them, as it is*  
4 *written;*



SER M. written; Rom. ii. 24: That is, Unbelie-

VIII.

vers are confirmed in their Infidelity, and Scoffers are encouraged to make a Scorn of Religion. Just as the *Jews* of old, who perpetually stiled themselves the *People of God*, and yet fell into the Vices of the Heathen Nations. Concerning whom the Prophet complains, *Ezek. xxxvi. 20; When they entred unto the Heathen whither they went, they profaned my Holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his Land.* It must needs indeed happen, corrupt as the nature of mankind is, that such *Offences* as these *will come*: That is, among numbers of men, endued with liberty of Will, and liable to many Temptations, it cannot be expected, notwithstanding all the Means and Assistances of the Gospel, it cannot be expected but Some men will be wicked and incorrigible. But *we be* to That man, saith our Saviour, *through whom the Offence cometh.* Every such person, whatever his *Profession* be, is an Enemy to Christ, and a Reproach to his Religion. *Little children,* saith

*no Argument against Christianity.* 171

saith St John, let no man deceive you:— **S E R M.**  
*He that committeth Sin, is of the Devil:* **VIII.**  
and ——— *Whoever doth not righteousness,*  
*is not of God; 1 Joh. iii. 7, 8, 10. Every*  
*Vice therefore whatsoever, that any Chri-*  
*stian is guilty of, has (I say) in general*  
*a Tendency to defeat the great End and*  
*Design of Christianity; and brings Dis-*  
*honour upon the Name, and upon the*  
*Religion of Christ. But when any thing*  
*which is a part of the Christian Doctrine,*  
*is itself in particular made a direct Ground*  
*and immediate Cause of Wickedness; the*  
*case then is infinitely worse, and the Re-*  
*proach unspeakably greater. When the*  
*Gospel is not only rendred ineffectual to*  
*prevent Sin, but Christ (as the Apostle in*  
*the Text expresses it) made to be Him-*  
*self the Minister of Sin; this is what St*  
*Jude calls, Turning the Grace of God into* ver. 4  
*Lasciviousness; or, in St Peter's language, 2 Pet. ii:*  
*it is, by means of the very Promise of Li-* 19.  
*berty, making men the Servants of cor-*  
*ruption. Of This kind were Those in*  
*the Apostle's days, who said, Let us do*  
*evil, that good may come; Whose damna-*  
*tions*

S E R M. *tion is just ; Rom. iii. 8. Of the same sort*

VIII.

*were Those, who, because the Apostle had taught them, Ye are not under the law, but under grace, ch. vi. 14 ; thought they might the more safely indulge themselves in Sin, for that they were not under the law, but under grace, ver. 15 ; And because the Apostle, extolling the Mercy and Compassion of God, had affirmed that, where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound, ch. v. 20 ; therefore they concluded, ch. vi. 1. that they might continue in Sin, that Grace might abound. And of the same kind are Those Christians at All Times and in All Places, who, upon any pretence whatsoever, set up Any Expedients, of whatever sort they be, either in point of Doctrine or Practice ; as Equivalents to be accepted of God, in the stead of Virtue and true Goodness. Concerning whom our Saviour speaks, St Matt. v. 19 ; Whosoever shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so ; (that is, whosoever shall upon any pretence, or by any doctrine whatsoever, diminish the necessity of Moral Virtue ; )*

*be*

*no Argument against Christianity.* 173

he shall be called the *Least* in the Kingdom SERM.  
of Heaven; that is, (as it would Now be VIII.  
expressed in *Modern* language,) such a one  
shall *Least* of all men ever be admitted  
there, or, of all men he shall be the *Last*  
that will ever be received into the King-  
dom of God. We usually and very justly  
expose the Folly of *Popish* Superstition,  
when we hear of their dressing up the  
Bodies of men *departed*, in the *Cloaths*  
and *Habit* of some particular *Monastick*  
*Order*; for the greater Security of their  
departed Souls, after having lived a vi-  
cious and profane life. All Superstitions  
are not *equally ridiculous*: But the *De-*  
*ceit* is the very same, and equally *Fatal*,  
when *Protestants*, when Christians of *Any*  
*denomination*, teach men to expect Salva-  
tion by means of *any Expedient whatso-*  
*ever*, by means of any thing which an  
*Immoral* person can possibly do for him-  
self, or which any other person can pos-  
sibly do for him; by his fiercely adhering  
to the Doctrines or Practices of Any Sect  
whatsoever, by his presumptuously relying  
upon the Merits of Christ himself, or by  
any



SERMON. any other Method whatsoever; so long as  
 VIII. he continues really in the number of  
 Those, concerning whom our Lord has  
 declared and earnestly warned us, that,  
 whatever Acknowledgments and Professi-  
 ons they may make, in *calling him, Lord,*  
*Lord;* and whatever Hopes they may flat-  
 ter themselves withal, in having *prophesied*  
*and even worked Miracles in his Name;*  
 still he will profess unto them at the  
 Great Day, *I never knew you; Depart*  
*from Me, ye that work iniquity.*

III. *Thirdly;* The *Third* and *Last* thing  
 I proposed to show, was, that from what  
 has been said, there arises a very plain  
 and easy Rule, by which we may judge  
 of the Malignity and Dangerousness of  
 Any Error in Matters of Religion. In  
 proportion as the Error tends to recon-  
 cile Any Vicious Practice with the Pro-  
 fession of Religion, or (as the Text ex-  
 presses it) to make *Christ the Minister of*  
*Sin;* in the same proportion is the *Doc-*  
*trine* pernicious, and the *Teachers* of it  
 justly to be deemed Corrupt. And This  
 is the reason, why our Lord, when he  
 warns

warns Christians to beware of *False Teachers*, who should come to them in *Sheeps cloathing*, but inwardly they were *rav-  
ening Wolves*; gives us this One Mark on-ly, by which for ever to distinguish them; *By their Fruits ye shall know them.* All other Tests, may possibly be deceitful: Fair Speeches, Great Learning and Abili-ties, Fervent Zeal, Numbers, Authority, strict Observance of Ceremonies, even Worldly Austerities, and the Appearan-ces of the most devotional Piety; all these may possibly accompany, a very *False* and very *Wicked* Religion. But the *Fruits* of *Virtue* and *True Goodness*, these are *Marks*, which admit *No Counterfeit*. If the course of a man's *Life*, be *virtu-ous* and *charitable*; and his *Doctrine* leads men towards no Superstition; towards nothing but *Virtue* and *Justice* and *Good-ness* and *Charity*, in expectation of That righteous Judgment to come, which the *Light* of nature itself gave men reason to look for, and which God has Now assured absolutely by the Gospel of Christ; This is a *Mark* or *Character*, to which  
nothing

SERM.  
VIII.

nothing has *any similitude*, but what is itself really and truly the *same*. All other Doctrines and Pretences of Religion, may possibly be very *consistent* with making *Christ the Minister of Sin*. If they be so, they are at best *uncertain or useless* Doctrines; and if they have any direct *Tendency* to *encourage* and *promote* this *Evil*, then 'tis infallibly certain that they are *False and Pernicious*. Hence (for Instance) we may very easily know, what judgment we ought to frame of Those, who at any time set themselves against the Use of *Reason* in matters of Religion; making a principal part of the Obedience of the Gospel, to consist in professing confidently to *believe*, and in zealously contending to *maintain*, certain *opinions* whereof they have *No understanding*; Which is evidently the *easiest* thing in the World, for the *wickedest* and most *worthless* of men to do. By the same Rule may easily be understood the true nature and ground of all those inhumane *Persecutions*, practised by the Church of *Rome* under Pretences of Religion in *such* a manner, as

if

if they thought the *Design* of the Son of S E R M.  
*man's Coming*, was not to *save mens lives*, VIII.  
 but to *destroy them*; and as if they un-  
 derstood *That Prophecy* of his, not con-  
 cerning an *eventual corruption*, but con-  
 cerning the real *End and Intent* of his  
 Religion; *Think not that I am come to*  
*send Peace upon Earth; I came not to*  
*send Peace, but a Sword.* By the same  
 Rule likewise it is obvious to judge, of  
 what dangerous consequence must be those  
*Confessions to the Priest*, and formal *Absol-*  
*utions* repeated in a perpetual Circle; by  
 which, men may for ever be *Penitents*,  
 without ever *Repenting*; and be continu-  
 ally *doing Penance*, without ever *amend-*  
*ing their Lives and Manners at all.* Which  
 manner of applying what they call the  
*Sacraments of the Church*, is (I think)  
 what St *John* styles by that severe name  
 of *Sorcery*, in his description of those  
*corruptions of religion*, by which *All Na-*  
*tions* were in the latter days to be *deceived*;  
 Rev. xviii. 23. 'Twill not be easy to find  
 any other sort of *Sorcery*, by which  
 whole Nations of men who call them-  
 selves



SERM. selves Christians, can be shown to have  
 VIII. been deceived. Lastly; by the same Rule  
 ~~~~~ may no less plainly be discerned, how  
 great and fatal a Deceit it is, which a-
 mong *Protestants also* has but too gene-
 rally prevailed; when, confessing their
 Sins to *God himself*, in like manner as
 the *Romanists* do to the *Priest*, they look
 upon themselves *absolved in course*, and
 return to the Practice of the same Sins
 again; grounding perversely, upon the
gracious Promises of the Gospel, a false
 and delusive notion of *Repentance*; very
 much like to *That* of Those in the A-
 postles days, who *continued in Sin*, that
Grace might abound. Which is destroying
 the very *Nature* and *Necessity* of *Virtue*.
 'Tis the highest *contempt* and *mockery* of
 God, to turn his very *Mercy* into an en-
 couragement of *Disobedience*. 'Tis, in-
 stead of *reforming* the World, actually
corrupting it, and literally making *Christ*
 the *Minister of Sin*.



S E R M O N IX.

GOD will reward all Men according to their Deserts.



REV. xxii. 11, 12.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still: And behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be.



AND are we then to imagine, S E R M. IX.
that God has at last no concern
whether men be righteous or
wicked? whether the Unjust
repents, or continues to be unjust still?

VOL. IX.

N 2

No:

SERM. No: His declaring that he *will reward*
IX. every man according to his Works, evidently shows the contrary: And his warning them of the *Suddenness* of his coming to distribute those Rewards, is a yet *more* earnest call to Repentance: And an Argument *still more* pressing than either of the former, is this very declaration, this additional threatening, that even *before* his coming, if they continue obstinate, he will forsake and leave them to the effects of their own Wickedness; *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.* There is no place in the whole inspired writings, wherein is given a nobler and more majestick description of God's dealings with Mankind, than in the Words now read unto you. God represents himself as the great Judge and Disposer of all things, sitting *in the circuit of Heaven*, (as 'tis expressed, *Job xxii. 14;*) that is, being essentially present every-where, beholding all the Actions of Men, observing all their Designs, considering all their Thoughts and Intentions; weighing all their Deserts, and resolving to reward every man according to his Works;

Works; Declaring this his Intention by S E R M.
the Arguments of Reason, by the Dictates IX.
of Nature and Conscience, by the Voice

of the Law, by the Declarations of the Prophets, by the Preaching of the Gospel, by the perpetual Exhortations of his Apostles and Ministers; Warning men of the Suddenness of his coming to Judgment, that they may be always prepared, and not surprized in their Sins; exhorting the Righteous to persevere in their Obedience, and to improve continually in the Practice of Virtue; and denouncing to the obstinately Wicked and Impenitent, that if they will not be brought to a timely Repentance, by those Motives of Religion he has thought fit to afford them, he will give them up to themselves to eat the Fruit of their own ways, and to be filled with their own De-vices. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* As our Goodness extendeth not to *Him*; so neither doth our Wickedness or Malice: 'Tis not for his *own* sake, but for *ours*, that God com-
N 3 mands

S E R M. mands us to be religious; nor does our
 IX. Profaneness and Impiety hurt *Him* at all,
 but *ourselves* only. If therefore men *will*
 be wicked, after all reasonable means have
 been made use of for their Conviction;
 nothing is more fit, nothing more becom-
 ing the Supreme Governour of all things,
 than to give them over to continue in
 their Wickedness: Nor can Any Punish-
 ment be more proper and equitable, if
 men *will* be *unjust* in defiance of all the
 Arguments of the Gospel, in contempt of
 all the Mercies and all the Judgments of
 God; than to *let them be unjust still*.

O U R Saviour in this and the foregoing
 chapter gives St *John* in his Vision a
 Prospect of the Heavenly *Jerusalem*; that
 is, represents to him the inexpressible
 Happiness of the Blessed in their future
 state, under the figurative description, of
 a City whose Walls were precious Stones,
 and her Streets and Buildings of pure
 Gold; which had no need of the Sun,
 neither of the Moon to shine in it; for
 the Glory of God did lighten it, and the
 Lamb is the Light thereof; where the Ser-
 vants

vants of God shall perpetually see his face, S E R M.
and his Name shall be in their foreheads : IX.

The Literal meaning of which figurative
expressions, is in part set down, ch. xxi. 3 ;

*Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men,
and he will dwell with them, and they
shall be his people, and God himself shall be
with them, and be their God; And God
shall wipe away all tears from their Eyes,
and there shall be no more Death, neither
Sorrow nor Crying, neither shall there be any
more pain; for the former things are passed
away.*

Which being but a very imperfect
Representation of that happy state, whose
enjoyments consist in things whereof at
present we have no Idea's, and which con-
sequently cannot be described to us by
Words; therefore our Saviour in the fol-
lowing part of that *xxist* chapter and the
beginning of this *xxi^{id}*, proceeds to repre-
sent the Happiness of the Heavenly State,
under the Similitude of such things, which,
being according to our present Apprehen-
sion the most valuable, are proper to raise
in us a Figurative Notion of the Great-
ness of that Happiness, whose true and

S E R M. literal description we are not in this im-

IX. perfect state capable of comprehending. Immediately after which, that the *remote-ness* or *distance* of the Object might not diminish its Greatness, and too much weaken the force of the impression it was to make upon men, he adds, ver. 6; *These sayings are faithful and true,---and things which must shortly be done*: And ver. 7; *Behold, I come quickly*: And ver. 10; *Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this Book; for the Time is at hand*: And, in the words of the Text; *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be*. The natural consequence of which speedy expectation of Judgment, is to infer that *Good men* ought perpetually to be exhorted to persevere steddily in their pious course, and to watch constantly, *lest at any Time* (as our Saviour elsewhere expresses it) *their heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon them unawares*: For as a Thief shall it come on all them that dwell on the whole Earth. Therefore be that is right-
eous,

teous, let him take great care that he be S E R M.
 righteous still; and he that is holy, let him IX.
 be holy still. And on the contrary *Wicked*
 men ought for the same reason earnestly
 to be warned, that, if they repent not
 very speedily, the Time will soon come
 when it shall be too late for them to have
 any Alteration made in their state: *He*
that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and
be that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

IN the words thus explained, there are
 clearly contained the following particu-
 lars:

1st; A general Doctrine, that God will
 reward every man with exact Justice ac-
 cording to his Deserts: *To give every*
man according as his Work shall be.

2^{dly}; A particular Inforcement of this
 general Doctrine, from the consideration
 of the *Speediness* of its being put in ex-
 ecution: *Behold, I come quickly, and my*
reward is with me.

3^{dly}; AN Inference drawn from the
 fore-going consideration; that seeing how
 short the Time is, good men have great
 reason to watch carefully, lest at any
 time

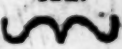
SERM. time they fall away, and be surprized
 IX. with Judgment: *He that is righteous, let
 him be righteous still; and he that is holy,
 let him be holy still.*

4thly; A Warning to the *Wicked*, drawn from the same consideration; that, if they repent not very speedily, the Time will quickly come, when God will give them over as incorrigible, and leave them to the sad Effects of their own Perverseness: *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.*

I. *First*; HERE is the general Doctrine laid down, that God will reward every man with exact Justice according to his Deserts. *To give every man according as his Work shall be.* The Foundation of all Government, is the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments; and the Greatness and Wisdom of a Supreme Governor, consists always in the exactness of that Distribution. God therefore, whose Kingdom ruleth absolutely over all, who has the Power of all things immediately in his own Hands, who governs the Universe

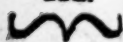
verse uncontroulably by the Counsel of S E R M.
his own Will, and whose Greatness and IX.
Wisdom are infinitely superiour to the im-
perfect Excellencies of all finite Beings
whatsoever; must consequently be as much
more exact, than any mortal Sovereign, in
the distribution of Rewards and Punish-
ments, as his Wisdom is more impossible
to be deceived, his Power more incapable
of being resisted, and his Justice more im-
possible to be perverted. By the Light of
Nature itself therefore, this Doctrine was
known with great Certainty, that God
would reward every man according to his
Deserts; it being evidently contradictory
to the very Notion of the Being of God,
and of his governing the World, that his
supreme Kingdom should be established
upon any other Measures, than those of
everlasting Righteousness and unalterable
Equity. The Consequence of this was,
that such as looked no farther than the
present State, and thought Man to be
made only for an Inhabitant of the Lower
World, expected every man's Prosperity
in *this Life*, should have been proportion-
able

S E R M. able to the degree of his Virtue. Which
IX. when they found not to be true in the
Event, they concluded, that since God
could not possibly be other than just, and
yet in the Dispensations of Providence
there appeared no Justice, therefore there
could not really be any God at all. And
had it been certain that these Inequalities
of Providence were *final*, the Argument
would indeed have been strong and unan-
swerable against the Being of God. But
the Wiser and Better men among them,
saw further; and judged, that the things
which *at present* appeared to Us so un-
equal, might easily, by the Conduct of a
superiour Wisdom, be made equal *here-
after*; For that even here among Men,
the Justice of a Wise and Good Gover-
nour does not consist in rewarding or pu-
nishing his Subjects immediately every mo-
ment, but in doing it exactly and exem-
plarily at such periods of Time, at which
it may have the greatest and most exten-
sive Influence for the Benefit of his whole
Dominions. And many *more* and *greater*
reasons there may be for such delay in
the

the Administration of God's Government; S E R M.
who, having all *future* Time in his Power as well as the *present*, is sure not to be IX.
disappointed of doing that at a *fitter* time, 
which otherwise it might be expected he should do *Now*. Many *more*, I say, and *greater* reasons than there can be in any *Human* Government, which if it does not administer Justice in the present Moment, it can never be certain it shall hereafter be able to do it at all. To the many *natural* Proofs therefore of the Immortality of the Soul, the Best and Wisest men among the Heathens added this *Moral* Argument also; that since God could not but be Just and Good, and yet Justice and Goodness did not sufficiently appear in the present Dispensations of Providence, therefore there would certainly be a future State, wherein should finally be rendred to every man according as his deserts should be. And This Conclusion was extremely reasonable: For from Justice not being administred at present, one of these two things must of necessity be inferred; either that there will be a future State,

S E R M. State, without which Justice can never be

IX.



done at all ; or else that there is indeed no Government of the World, and consequently no God. Which being so ; 'tis, of the two, infinitely more reasonable, in the judgment even of the bare light of *Nature itself*, to conclude from hence that there will be a future State, than to conclude that there is no God : Because, of the Being of God, there are numberless *other* natural and collateral Proofs, with which *this* side of the Argument is in conjunction and agreement ; but there is no Argument in Nature, to lead us on the *other* Side with Any probability, to imagine that there will be no future State. Upon these grounds therefore, the Best and Wifest Men even in the Heathen World, did believe in general a Judgment to come. And they who had not Capacity, to prove this Truth to themselves by Arguments of strict Reasoning ; yet were convinced in their minds by that natural Conscience of Right, which God had implanted in them, that God who governed all things, would sooner or later, in this World or in another,

other, reward every man according to his S E R M,
Works. This is the Voice of *Nature*, IX.
and the Dictate of *Reason*: And in all

the *Revelations* that God has ever been pleased to make of himself to Mankind, his principal design has always been to confirm this most important Truth, this Foundation of all Religion and Virtue, with clearer and stronger evidence; and to vindicate it from the Obscurity, wherein vicious and profane, or ignorant and superstitious men, had endeavoured to involve it. The very giving of a Law, does in the Nature of the thing itself, imply a desire in the Law-giver that his Commandments should be observed: And the adding a Sanction of Rewards and Punishments, is only an express and explicit declaration in particular, of what was before tacitly implied in general in the nature of the thing; that a Wise and Good Law-giver would take Care, that the Happiness of all his Subjects should be proportionable to their Obedience to the Laws of his Kingdom. In the *ancientest* Times under the *Old Testament*, while
God

S E R M. God had as yet been pleased to give but
 IX. very obscure Notices of himself by Revelation, yet Good Men *had* a firm implicit Belief and Reliance upon God, for the Equity of his Distributions. *Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?* said *Abraham* in the case of *Sodom*, Gen. xviii. 23; *That be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?* In which matter tho' the Patriarch possibly was mistaken as to the *particular*, in judging that God was obliged in Justice to deliver private righteous persons from a publick *temporal* Destruction; yet the Notion *in the general*, concerning God's finally distinguishing men according to their Deserts, was so right and of so much importance, that God thought fit to encourage it by complying with his expectation even *without any Necessity*, and rescuing *Lot* by a miraculous and unexampled Deliverance. In the Book of *Job*, one of the ancientest of all the *Jewish* Writings, we find the same Notion no less clearly exprest, ch. xxxiv. ver. 10; *Far be it from God, that he should do Wickedness;*

ness; and from the Almighty, that he should SERM.
commit Iniquity. For the Work of a Man IX.

shall be render unto him, and cause every Man to find according to his Ways. After the giving of the Law, wherein almost all the Promises and Threatnings were temporal, and which consequently could not be made out to be exact, unless they were understood as typically representing a more perfectly equitable distribution hereafter; yet Holy Men, without being able to apprehend particularly in what manner it would be accomplished, depended upon it as the certain and unalterable Nature and Will of God, that by some means or other every man should appear finally to be exactly recompensed according as his Work should be. Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth Mercy, saith the Psalmist, (Ps. lxi. 12;) for thou renderest to every man according to his Work. And the wise man, Prov. xxiv. 12; Doth not he that pondereth the Heart, consider it? and he that keepeth thy Soul, doth not He know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his Works? and again,

SERMON. Eccles. xii. 14; God shall bring every Work
 IX. into Judgment, with every secret thing,
 whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

By the Prophets, God himself in following times still more and more expressly declared this Doctrine; Jer. xvii. 10; *I the Lord search the Heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his Ways, and according to the Fruit of his Doings*: Which very same Words nearly, are again repeated, ch. xxxii. 19. In the New Testament, this great Truth is revealed yet more particularly, with more clearness, and with more distinct Circumstances; and every where insisted upon as the principal Argument and Foundation of the whole Gospel. Thus our Saviour himself concludes his Exhortation to the Practice of one of the most difficult Duties of Religion, St. Matt. xvi. 27; *For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his Angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his Works*. With this the Apostles always close their Arguments to perswade men to Obedience. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the

the Romans, ch. ii. 6 ; God, saith he, will S E R M.
render to every man according to his deeds ; IX.

To them who by patient continuance in well-
doing seek for glory and honour and immor-
tality ; eternal life : But unto them that
are contentious and do not obey the Truth,
but obey unrighteousness ; indignation and
wrath. And This, to the Jew first, and
also to the Gentile ; To the Gentiles, ac-
cording to their behaviour under the
Light of Nature ; To the Jews, accord-
ing to their behaviour under the Law of
Moses ; To the Christians, according to
their behaviour under the Gospel of Christ.
In his first Epistle to the Cor. iii. 8 ; Every
man shall receive his own reward, ac-
cording to his own labour : In his second to
the Cor. v. 10 ; that every one may receive
the things done in his body, according to that
he hath done, whether it be good or bad :
In his Epistle to the Gal. ch. vi. 7 ; What-
soever a man soweth, that shall he also
reap. St. Peter, in his first Epistle, ch. i.
17 ; God, without respect of persons, judg-
eth according to every man's work. Our
Saviour himself again, Rev. ix. 23 ; I am

SERM. *he which searcheth the reins and hearts,*
 IX. *and I will give unto every one of you ac-*
 cording to your Works: And ch. xx. ver.
 12; *The dead were judged out of those*
things that were written in the Books, ac-
cording to their Works.

AND this dealing with men according to their Works, signifies in Scripture not only that great and general Distinction, of rewarding the good, and punishing the wicked; but it extends also to an exactness of particulars, in the degrees and proportions of those respective states. For tho', in the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, there may seem to be something that might favour the contrary opinion, when our Saviour represents himself giving to them that came in late, as well as to them that had born the burden and heat of the day, to each man equally a penny; yet in reality the Meaning of that Parable, is only to declare, that Sinners of the Gentiles, upon their true Conversion, should become equally capable of the Benefits of the Gospel, and of being admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, as the
Jews

according to their Deserts.

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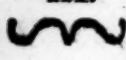
Jews who had been all along the people of God. But, that in the Participation of that Happiness, into which they had all equally a Right to enter, they should all enjoy an *equal* portion; This the Parable does not affirm. And in other places, the Scripture, as well as the Reason of things, does on the contrary expressly mention great Variety of *degrees*: Telling us of some that *shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament*, and others as the Stars ^{2.} for ever and ever; and among these, of some that shall differ from others, as one Star differeth from another Star in glory: That one man shall receive a prophet's reward; and another, the reward of a righteous man; and a third inferiour to Both of these, yet *shall in no wise lose his reward*: That one shall receive Authority over ten Cities, and another be made Ruler over five: That every man shall receive his own reward, i. e. his own particular proportion, according to his own labour; reaping sparingly or bountifully, according as he has sparingly or bountifully sown: That He whose Work abides the trial of the

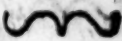
S E R M.
IX.
Dan. xii.
1 Cor. xv.
Mat. x. 41.
Luk. xix.
1 Cor. iii.
2 Cor. ix.
1 Cor. iii.
Fire

S E R M. *Fire of God's judgment, shall receive a*
 IX. *great reward; and another, who shall suffer loss by his Work being burnt, yet shall himself, for the sincerity of his mistaken Intention, be saved notwithstanding, tho' so as by Fire: with Difficulty, so as a man escapes out of a house which is on Fire. On the other side, in the distribution of Punishments, the Scripture expressly declares, that in the day of judgment, there*
 Mat. x. 15. *are some that shall hear a more intolerable Sentence, than that which passes on the land even of Sodom and Gomorrah; And our Saviour threatens concerning the hypocritical Pharisees, that they shall receive*
 Mar. xii. 40. *(περισσότερον κρίμα) greater damnation;*
 Luk. xii. 47. *And in general, of those that knew their Master's Will and did it not, that they shall be beaten with many stripes; when those who knew not their Master's Will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes: They shall be punished, or beaten with stripes, because they committed things worthy of stripes, and therefore not capable of being wholly excused; yet with few stripes, because their*
 their

their fault was extenuated with some degrees of *ignorance*. And this Method of proceeding, our Saviour not only assures us will be *in fact* the Method wherein God will proceed in judging the World; but moreover declares it to be of *Necessity* agreeable to the Nature and Attributes of the righteous Judge of the whole Earth; appealing herein to mens natural Sense of Right and Equity, in matters of Justice and Judgment among themselves. For so he adds in the very next words; *For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* In the matter of *Punishment*, this Judging of men *according to their Works*, is to be understood strictly and literally, according to the *exact Desert* or *Merit* of their Works. For *Punishment* being God's *strange* Work, (as the Scripture expresses it;) which he inflicts, not with any delight, but merely because 'tis fit and necessary; 'tis therefore infinitely certain, that no man shall be punished otherwise, than according to the exact

SERM. *Desert or Demerit* of his Actions: But

IX.  in the Matter of *Reward*, the Case is different; For here, God may do what he pleases with his own, and bestow his Grace and Favour, his Bounty and Free Gifts, in what manner he himself pleases. *Merit*, (which those of the Church of Rome vainly affect to talk of,) we possibly can have none. For our *good Works*, as we call them, are at the best so imperfect, as to need Pardon rather than deserve a Reward; and if they were never so perfect, yet they were still nothing but doing what was our Duty to do, and we should even Then be but unprofitable Servants. *Merit* therefore, 'tis plain we cannot possibly have Any; And yet such is the Goodness of God, that by his gracious Promise and Free Gift in Christ, he is pleased to give us as certain a Title and as undoubted a Claim to the Happiness of Heaven upon our sincere Obedience, as if we had really deserved it of Right. And this his Free Gift he is moreover pleased to distribute in such a manner, that though it cannot justly be said to be bestowed

bestowed on us for our Works, yet it will S E R M.
be exactly *in proportion* to them; and to IX.
every man shall be given his reward, tho' 
not indeed *upon account of any Merit* in
his Works, yet *according as* his Works
shall be. It must be confessed, 'tis merely
to the Goodness and Beneficence of God,
to his gracious Will and good Pleasure, to
his *Decree* and Appointment in Christ,
that we owe our being capable of any
Happiness at all: Yet this can be no
ground of Scruple or Perplexity, no Cause
of Difficulty or Uncertainty, in mens
judging of their own Estate; since in this
voluntary Decree and Appointment of
God, he has clearly declared it to be his
Will and Pleasure, that every man's Part in
this free and undeserved Gift, shall be as
exactly apportioned to his Work, as if it
had been a Reward naturally and pro-
perly due, to the Merit of the Work it-
self. *Wicked men* have just reason to fear
the Strictness and Severity of the Judg-
ment of God, since they know their Pu-
nishment shall be exactly proportionable
to the Greatness and Demerit of their
Crimes.

S E R M. Crimes. *Good men* have no less reason to
 IX. rejoice in expectation of God's righteous
 Judgment, since, tho' they are very sensible they have no *Merit*, yet the Promise of God, that their Sincerity shall be accepted, is as good a Security to them, as any proper Merit of their own, if they really had it, would be. Simplicity and Integrity, Sincerity and Uprightness in the Practice of Virtue, and in Obedience to the clear Commands of God, according to our imperfect Ability; without regard to matter of difficult Speculation, and uncertain Dispute; only taking care, not to lay Stress upon Ceremonies, and upon Doctrines and Opinions of Men, instead of the Commandments of Christ; Sincerity, I say, is the *measure* by which our Actions shall be judged; and the *ground of proportion*, tho' not the *meritorious cause*, of the Reward of good Men. And this Proportion is so certain, that the Scripture teaches us to depend upon it with the same infallible Assurance, since God's *gracious and free promise* of it; as if it had been of strict Right due to us originally.
 from

from the *Justice and Righteousness* of God. SERM.
IX.
God is not unrighteous, saith the Apostle,

(*Heb. vi. 10;*) *to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have showed towards his Name* : And St Paul exhorts us to be *therefore stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord* ; (*1 Cor. xv. 58.*) For the present, things may be in confusion a little while, and the righteous may be oppressed for a few moments ; but they have sufficient reason to wait with patience, and comfort themselves with the expectation of God's righteous judgment. *If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter, says the wise man, Eccles. v. 8 ; for he that is higher than the highest, regardeth, and there be higher than they.*

AND This may suffice for Explication of the general Doctrine contained in the Words, that God will reward every man with exact Justice according to his Deserts ;

SER.M. ferts; To give every man according as his
IX. Work shall be.

THE Second thing observable in them, was the *particular* Inforcement of this *general* Doctrine, from the consideration of the *Speediness* of it's being put in Execution: *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.* But this must be referred to a farther Opportunity.



SERMON



SERMON X.

GOD will reward all Men according to their Deserts.



REV. xxii. 11, 12.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still: And behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be.



N the Words I have before observed these four Particulars; SERM. X.

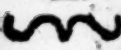
1st; A general Doctrine, that

God will reward every man with exact Justice according to his Deserts: To give every man according as his Work shall be.

2^{dly};

SERM.

X.

 2dly; A PARTICULAR Inforcement of this general Doctrine, from the consideration of the *Speediness* of its being put in execution: *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.*

3dly; AN Inference drawn from the foregoing consideration; that, seeing how short the Time is, *good men* have great reason to watch carefully, lest at any time they fall away, and be surprized with Judgment: *He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is Holy, let him be Holy still.*

4thly; A WARNING to the *Wicked*, drawn from the same consideration; that, if they repent not very speedily, the Time will quickly come, when God will give them over as incorrigible, and leave them to the sad effects of their own Perverseness: *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.*

THE *first* of these I have already discoursed of, namely, the general Doctrine, that God will reward every man with exact Justice according to his Deserts: To
give

give every Man according as his Work shall S E R M.
be. I proceed Now in the X.

II. *Second* place, to the particular In-
forcement of this general Doctrine, from
the consideration of this *Speediness* of its
being put in Execution: *Behold I come*
quickly, and my reward is with me. The
great Reason why the Arguments of Re-
ligion have so little influence upon the
generality of Men, is because the Rewards
and Punishments of another Life appear
to them so remote and at such a Distance,
that like Objects viewed afar off, their
distance diminishes from their real Mag-
nitude; and like Designs laid for a long
time to come, the Certainty of the Event
seems to decrease in proportion to its re-
moteness from the present time. In mat-
ters of *temporal* concern, this judgment
men make of distant Events is *true*; Be-
cause the Time to come, not being at
all in *our* Power; and the incidents upon
which all future Events depend, being
wholly out of the reach of *our* imperfect
fore-sight; the uncertainty therefore of
the Event is, not only in *appearance*, but
in

S E R M. in *reality* proportionable to the distance of
X. time, wherein there is room for Accidents
to hinder its Accomplishment; for Acci-
dents, which no Human Wisdom can
foresee, and Human Power could prevent
if they *were* foreseen. But in Matters
wherein God has declared himself con-
cerned, and which *he* has revealed it to be
his Will and Pleasure they *shall* come to
pass; the Case is wholly different. For
God having all *future Time* no less abso-
lutely in his Power, than the present Mo-
ment; whatever *he* has appointed, is lia-
ble to no more Uncertainty upon account
of distance of Time, than if it was al-
ready actually fulfilled. Here therefore
Men ought by Reason and Judgment to
correct the Errour of their Imagination;
and by serious and frequent Meditation
to represent those things to themselves as
Now present, which Time will certainly
Hereafter bring to be so. With regard to
distance of *Place* in sensible Objects, we
are perpetually correcting the Errours of
our Senses by the Reason of our Mind;
and Objects which at a distance appear to
the

the Eye much smaller than they really S E R M.
are, we by our Judgment always consider X.
as of their true Magnitude. So in things
of whose Truth we are assured by Divine
Revelation, since distance of *Time* can di-
minish nothing from their real Certainty;
'tis the proper Act of reasonable Beings,
'tis our Understanding, 'tis our Interest and
our Duty, to consider them as they really
are in their own Nature, to judge of their
true Weight and real Importance to us;
and not suffer ourselves to be deceived
by such Errours of a careless Imagina-
tion, by such false Images of things fu-
ture and remote, as we know that Time
and Nearness of Approach of the things
themselves will certainly remove. Yet be-
cause, after all, in this imperfect State,
wherein things present and sensible are
perpetually withdrawing our Meditations
from things spiritual and remote, 'tis very
difficult for us to suffer the Arguments of
Religion, the Rewards and Punishments of
another Life, to have their true Weight
and just Influence upon us; therefore it
has pleased God, by concealing from e-

S E R M. very Man the period of his own Life,
 X. and by making it every day uncertain but
 his Soul may the next moment be required of him ; it has pleased God to cause Eternity, which can never be very far distant from us, to be looked upon always by reasonable and considerate persons, as being *very near, even at the Doors*. The whole Duration of this World, from its Creation to its final Period, from the Time of its arising out of an unformed Chaos 'till its sinking again into a heap of Ashes ; is, with respect to *God*, but as one single moment ; And if we ourselves were to live to its Consummation, it would even to *Us* also, when past, seem but as a few days, as a Shadow that departeth, or as a Dream when one awaketh. Most justly therefore may God represent that to us as coming very speedily, which we ourselves, when surprized with it, after how long soever a respite, shall think comes very quickly upon us. Vain men may Now mock at their distant Fear, and say, *Where is the promise of his coming ? For since the Fathers fell*
asleep

asleep, all things continue as they were, S E R M.
from the beginning of the Creation: But as X.

a thousand years are Now with God as one day, so it will Then appear even to Them also, when Time shall bring those things to be present, which they now despise as remote; and which the Certainty of the Event ought to make us Now look upon with the same Concern, as we are sure we shall then do. But this is not the whole of our Case. For, besides the Shortness of the Time itself, it is really to Us much shorter, in that to every particular Person, the World comes to an End at the Conclusion of his own Life; and to Him, that Moment which consigns him to Judgment, by requiring his Soul of him, and putting an End to all further Space of Probation; is in all respects the very same thing, as if the day of his Death were itself the great and final Day of Judgment. However remote therefore, with regard to the Ages of the World, that great Consummation of things may be; yet, since every man's proper Concern therein, or that which will determine his eternal Portion, is of

SERMON. necessity and inevitably very near, in all
 X. probability much nearer than he expects,
 and possibly not many moments distant
 from him; for this cause our Saviour very
 justly and with great Reason, as well as
 in great Mercy and Compassion to our In-
 firmities, always represents his Coming as
 being very near: *Behold, I come quickly,*
and my reward is with me, to give every
man according as his Work shall be. The
 Phrase, *my Reward is with me*, is taken
 from the Prophet *Isaiab*, ch. xl. 10; *Be-*
hold, the Lord God will come with strong
hand, and his arm shall rule for him; be-
hold, his reward is with him, and his Work
before him; and ch. lxii. 11; *Behold, the*
Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the
World; say ye to the daughter of Sion;
Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his
reward is with him, and his Work before
him: And it signifies, the *Speediness* of the
 Event; that whereas Now both the right-
 eous and the Wicked, wait as in a State of
 Probation, without Either of them finding
 their proper recompence; at the Coming
 of our Lord, they shall each without de-
 lay,

lay, have their Portion immediately assigned to them; *Behold, he comes quickly, and his reward is with him*; His Distribution of Rewards, will be immediate upon his Coming; and his Coming (with respect to the Concern every single person has therein,) will be very speedy. Accordingly, in his Appearance to St. Stephen, Acts vii. 56, he represents himself not as *sitting*, but as *standing* on the right hand of God, in a posture ready to *receive*, and as it were to *meet* his faithful Martyr: And in the Epistle to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 20, he describes himself under the figurative resemblance of one *standing at the door and knocking*, to signify that he who will receive him, must do it immediately and without delay. At the very *beginning* of the whole Prophecy, the Vision is introduced with a declaration that *the Time is at hand*, ch. i. 3: and in the Epistle to the Angel of the Church of *Philadelphia*, ch. iii. 11, are repeated the same Words, which in the Text *conclude as they began* the whole Book of this Prophecy, *Behold, I come quickly.*

S E R M. quickly. In the xxivth Chapter of St Mat-
 X. thew's Gospel, after a large Prophetical
 description of the Signs preceding his
 coming to Judgment, our Saviour con-
 cludes his Discourse with an earnest ex-
 hortation to his Disciples, to *Watch* and
 to *be ready always*; *For in such an hour,*
says he, as you think not, the Son of Man
cometh: And if an evil Servant shall say
in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming;
and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants,
and to eat and drink with the drunken;
The Lord of that servant shall come in a
day when he looketh not for him, and in an
hour that he is not aware of; and shall
cut him asunder, and appoint him his por-
tion with the hypocrites; there shall be
weeping and gnashing of Teeth. And the
 Apostles accordingly in all their Epistles,
 are in like manner perpetually putting the
 Churches in mind, that *the Day of the*
Lord is at Hand. The Passages of this
 nature are so frequent, that many Exposi-
 tors have from thence been apt to ima-
 gine, that the Apostles themselves were
 possessed with an erroneous expectation,
 that

that the End of the World was to happen S E R M.
in That generation. And possibly, if our X.
Lord thought fit so to intermix his proph-
etical description of the destruction of
Jerusalem, and of his final Coming to
Judgment, (the one being a Type of the
other;) that it should not be easy to dis-
tinguish which part of the Prophecy be-
longed peculiarly to each event: And if
he so thought fit to warn every *particular*
person of his being unexpectedly called
to Judgment, that his Expressions should
not be easily distinguishable from such as
would signify the Consummation of all
things to be at Hand; which in Effect
does really come upon every man at the
Time of his own Departure out of this
World: possibly, I say, in all This there
might be nothing unbecoming the All-
wise Dispensations of the Divine Provi-
dence. Yet on the other hand, that the
Apostles could not entertain such an O-
pinion of the World's coming to an End
in *Their* days, is much more probable;
For, the *Jews*, before and in the Apostles
times, had a very ancient and general
P 4 Tradition,

S E R M. Tradition, that the World was to continue at least six thousand Years, whereof
 X.  no less than two Thousand were to be Days of the Messias; And St Peter himself, in the passage before-mentioned, seems to refer to it, when, in order to show that *the Lord is not slack concerning his Promise, as some men count Slackness*, he bids us *not be ignorant of this one thing*, (alluding, as some think, to the six Days creation,) *that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*: And St Paul in several of his Epistles foretels expressly things that were to happen after a long period of time, concerning *perilous Times in the last days*, and great Corruptions of Manners, and a *Man of Sin* to be revealed after the Destruction of the Roman Empire: And our Saviour himself, even in the earliest Times of the Gospel, *before his own Sufferings*, and *before* the Apostles could have entertained any prejudice about the World's coming quickly to an End, and in that very Prophecy from whence that prejudice itself is supposed to have arisen,

Luk.

Luk. xxi. 24; speaks expressly of *Jeru-* S E R M.
X.
salem's being to be trodden down by the *Gentiles* for a long season, even 'till the times of the *Gentiles* should be fulfilled: And in this Book of the *Revelation*, after a large Prophecy of great Variety of Events to happen in a Succession of several Ages, our Saviour yet repeats it twice in the last Chapter; *Behold, I come quickly.* Considering all these things, I say; 'tis much more probable the Apostles could not be deceived with an erroneaus expectation of the End of the World being near in *their* days; but that by the expressions of the Suddenness of Christ's coming, they meant, as in some Places the Destruction of the *Jewish* Nation, and in others the Shortness of the Duration of this World with respect to Eternity, so in most places the Uncertainty of every particular man's life, and the certainty of Death transmitting them very speedily to Judgment: *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his Work shall be.*

S E R M. III. THE *Third* Thing remarkable in
 X. the Words of the Text, is the Inference
 drawn from the fore-going consideration;
 that, seeing how *short* the Time is, good
 men have great reason to watch carefully,
 lest at any time they fall away, and be sur-
 prized with Judgment: *He that is righte-*
ous, let him be righteous still; and he
that is holy, let him be holy still. As God
 has declared in Scripture, that *when the*
Wicked man turneth away from the Wick-
edness that he has committed, and doth that
which is lawful and right, he shall save
his Soul alive; so he has likewise de-
 nounced, that if *the righteous turneth a-*
way from his righteousness, and do accord-
ing to all the abominations that the Wicked
man doth; all his righteousness that he has
done, shall not be mentioned; but in his
Sin that he has sinned shall he die. For
 tho' the just man, while he continues such,
 has a certain assurance that he shall live
 by his Faith; yet if he draws back, says
 God, *My Soul shall have no Pleasure in*
him. The *Shortness* of the Time, during
 which there is room for these changes in
 mens

mens behaviour ; during which the final S E R M.
 and unalterable determination of mens X.
 State is deferred ; as 'tis a pressing Mo-
 tive, to Sinners to repent immediately ;
 so 'tis a strong Argument to perswade
 good men to persevere stedfastly in the
 course they are in ; to prevail with them
 which are *righteous, that they be righte-*
ous still. 'Tis, not only in order to avoid
 the final and eternal Wrath of God ; 'Tis,
 not only in order to attain a great and
 inexpressible Reward ; but 'tis *in itself*
 moreover a reasonable Service, that men
 should persevere in well-doing ; and 'tis a
 Warfare only for a very *short Time.* What
 Pity is it, that he who has already con-
 quered the Temptations of Sin, that has
 already established in his Soul an Habit
 of Virtue, that has already *tasted the good*
Word of God and the Powers of the World
to come ; should after This suffer himself
 to be tempted to fall away, and, for a
 few Moments sinful Gratifications, for-
 seit all his glorious Hopes of Happiness,
 and lose his Crown when he was just rea-
 dy to receive it ! *Hold that fast, that thou*
hast,

S E R M. *last*, says our Saviour, Rev. iii. 11, *that*
 X. *no man take thy Crown.* What Pity is it,
 that he who has born the burden and
 heat of the Day, should in the very E-
 vening lose his recompence, by refusing
 to finish his Work! that *he who is now*
righteous, should not *be righteous still*;
 when *behold* his Lord comes quickly, and
his reward is with him! Could ye not watch
with me one Hour, said our Saviour to his
 Disciples sleeping when their Master was
 about to be betrayed: Could ye not per-
 severe a few years in the Practice of
 Righteousness, (may it be said to Back-
 sliders at the Day of Judgment,) when
 your Reward was to be infinite and eter-
 nal, and your Labour could not be long,
 might possibly be very short, until your
 Lord at his coming had found you well-
 doing. Our Saviour's Exhortations upon
 this Argument, are extremely affectionate:
Let your loyns be girded about, and your
Lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto
men that wait for their Lord, when he will
return from the Wedding; that when he
cometh and knocketh, they may open unto
 him

according to their Deserts.

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him immediately: — Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not; St Luk. xii. 35. and ch. xii. 34; Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so That day come upon you unawares; For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole Earth: Watch ye therefore and Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. The Apostles in like manner in their Epistles, are perpetually reminding us, with great Earnestness, of this Argument: You yourselves know perfectly, saith St Paul, that the day of the Lord so cometh, as a Thief in the Night; 1 Th. v. 2: Therefore Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God: — For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the End; Heb. iii. 12, 14: and ch. xii. 15; Looking diligently, lest any man fail

S E R M. *fail of the grace of God; lest any root of*
 X. *bitterness springing up trouble you, and*
thereby many be defiled. Our Saviour him-
self again, in the Epistle to the Angel of
the Church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 11;
Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast,
which thou hast, that no man take thy
Crown: and to the Church of Thyatira,
ch. ii. 25; That which ye have already,
hold fast till I come; and he that overcom-
eth, and keepeth my Works unto the end, to
him will I give power over the Nations,
and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.
 I observe but one thing further upon this
 Head; and that is, that from the fore-
 cited Exhortations it appears, that *Perse-*
verance is not (as has by some been vain-
 ly imagined,) a necessary consequence of
 being once a true and faithful Servant of
 God; but 'tis a Duty perpetually incum-
 bent upon us; a Duty, the performance
 of which is the Effect of great Care and
 constant Watchfulness. And as it is a
 thing of infinite danger for him that is
 now wicked, if he repents not immediate-
 ly; so there is also, even upon him that *has*
 worthily

worthily repented, a perpetual danger of S E R M.
relapsing and of losing his reward, *if*, be- X.
ing *now righteous*, he does not apply a
constant Care and Diligence, that he *be*
righteous still.

IV. *Fourthly*; T H E *Last* Thing remarkable in the Words of the Text, is the Warning given to all Wicked men, that if they repent not very speedily, the Time will quickly come, when God will give them over as incorrigible, and leave them to the sad effects of their own Perverseness: *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* All the Mercies and all the Judgments of God, all the Promises and all the Threatnings in Scripture; in a word, the whole Design of the Gospel; is to call Sinners to Repentance. If they will not be drawn by these Cords of a Man, by these Motives suited to the Nature of rational Creatures; God is not obliged to compel them by Force, and to use Methods inconsistent with his Government of the Moral World. *As he hath no need of the* Eccles. xv.
sinful man, as the wise Son of *Sirach* well 12.
expresses

S E R M. expresses it; so neither is he in any want
 X. of the righteous. *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any Advantage to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to Him that thou makest thy way perfect?* Job xxxv. 7; and xxii. 2. 'Tis no Addition to his Happiness, that we do Good to ourselves and others; nor any diminution of his Greatness, if by our Wickedness we destroy ourselves. God therefore, as a Wise and Just Governour, and as a Good and Merciful Father, does all that is fit and reasonable, to prevail with us to become righteous in order to our own Happiness. But if we will not be made Happy, unless he work a Miracle to alter our Wills; if we will not become righteous, unless he change our Nature, and compel us contrary to the Order and Method of his Creation and of his Government of reasonable Creatures; both Reason and Scripture assure us, that he may very justly suffer us to

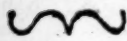
go on to be Wicked and Miserable. In the S E R M.

Old Testament : Of that wicked Genera- X.
tion before the Flood, which despised Gen. vi. 3.

Noah's Preaching : *My Spirit*, says he,
shall not always strive with Man. Of the
People that were disobedient in the Wil-
derness ; *My people would not hearken to* Ps. lxxxi.
my Voice, and Israel would none of me ; so 11, 12.

I gave them up unto their Hearts Lust,
and let them follow their own imagina-
tions. Of the *Jews* who fell away in the
Times of the Prophets ; *Why should ye be*
stricken any more ? Ye will revolt more and
more ; Is. i. 5 : Can the Ethiopian change
his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then
may ye also do good that are accustomed to
do evil ; Jer. xiii. 23 : and Ezek. iii. 27 ;
Thus saith the Lord God, He that heareth,
let him hear, and he that forbeareth, let
him forbear ; for they are a rebellious House.
Of back-sliders in future times propheti-
cally described before-hand, *Dan. xii. 10 ;*
Many shall be purified and made white and
tried, but the Wicked shall do wickedly :
and Hof. xiv. 9 ; The Ways of the Lord
are right, and the just shall walk in them ;

S E R M. *but the transgressors shall fall therein.* In

X. *the New Testament: Of those whose long*
 *Obstinacy and Incurribleness had rendered them unworthy of further instructi-*

Luk. viii. *on, our Saviour declares, that he therefore*

10. *spoke unto them in Parables, that see-*

Mat. xiii. *ing they might not see, and hearing they*

13. *might not understand; or, as St Mark ex-*

Mar. iv. *presses it, that seeing they might see and not*

12. *perceive, and hearing they might hear and*

not understand; lest at any time they

should be converted, and their Sins should

be forgiven them. And St Paul concern-

ing perverse persons, 1 Cor. xiv. 38; If

any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.

Mat. xxv. *Of the foolish Virgins, who watched not,*

neither had trimmed their lamps, but

went too late to buy oyl when the Bride-

groom came; 'tis observed that they

found no more place of admittance, than

if they had been slothful still. Of the Dis-

ciples themselves, who could not watch

with their Lord one Hour, tho' he had

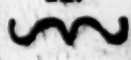
twice vouchsafed to awaken them himself;

'tis remarkable, that at the third time he

Mat. xxvi. *gives them this severe reproof; Sleep on*

45. *now,*

now, and take your rest. Of the Israel-
 ites, who, after all the wonders they had
 seen in *Egypt*, fell back to idolatry with
 the golden Calf, 'tis said, *Acts* vii. 42;
 that God turned and gave them up to wor-
 ship the host of Heaven. Of the idolatrous
 Gentiles, who did not like to retain God
 in their knowledge; that therefore God
 gave them up to uncleanness and to a re-
 probate mind. Of Pharaoh; that because
 of his Wickedness and Obstinacy, God at
 last even hardened his Heart judicially;
Rom. ix. 18. Of the unbelieving Jews;
 that seeing they put the Word of God from
 them, and judged themselves unworthy of
 everlasting life, therefore the Apostles
 were to leave them, and turn to the Gen-
 tiles; *Acts* xiii. 46. Of the Corrupters of
 Christianity, prophesied of by St Paul, who
 should arise in the Apostacy of the latter
 times; that such evil men and seducers should
 wax worse and worse, deceiving and being
 deceived; *2 Tim.* iii. 13: and that, because
 they received not the Love of the Truth
 that they might be saved, therefore God

S E R M.
 X.


Rom. i.
 24, 28.

VOL. IX.

Q 2

should

SERM. should send them strong delusion, that they
 X. should believe a Lie; That they all might
 be damned who believed not the Truth,
 but had pleasure in unrighteousness; 2
 Theff. ii. 10. Lastly, of all obstinately
 wicked and incorrigible persons, in the
 Words of the Text, at the End of the
 whole Scripture; that if they will not
 be moved to repent, by the things con-
 tained in that Book, by all the Argu-
 ments and Motives of the Gospel; then
He that is unjust, let him be unjust still;
and he that is filthy let him be filthy
still. I conclude with adding this One
 Observation only, that this *being given*
over to a reprobate mind, cannot pos-
 sibly be the case of any *well-meaning*
melancholy Person, who may be apt to be
 disturbed with such fears; Because, That
 very Fear itself, that Tenderness of Con-
 science, is a Demonstration that he is
 by no means given up to Hardness of
 Heart: The proper Use of the Doctrine
 upon This Head, is chiefly to Wicked
 and *Careless Persons*, to the Profane and
 Unholy,

according to their Deserts.

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Unholy, to Mockers and Despisers of Religion; that they repent immediately and without delay, lest hereafter they come to be *hardned* beyond remedy, *through the Deceitfulness of Sin.*



Q 3

SER-

Account of the

History of the
Nation: that they
without being
to be taken
to be taken

to be taken

to be taken

to be taken

to be taken

to be taken

to be taken

to be taken

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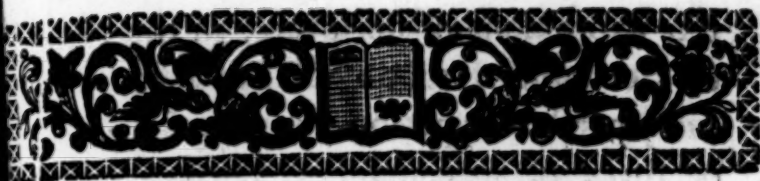
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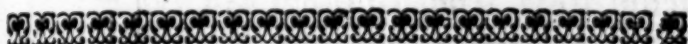
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S E R M O N XI.

Of the Deceitfulness of Sin.



H E B. iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.



THE Phrases, *To-day*, and *while* S E R M.
XI.
it is called To-day, signify in
Scripture the *present* time, the
present opportunity wherein a
Sinner is called upon to re-

pent; it signifies his doing it without delay, without venturing upon any further provocation, without longer tempting God, and abusing the greatness of the Divine Patience.

Q 4

SOME

S E R M.

XI.

Some have from these, and other the like expressions of Scripture, in this chapter; concluded that God has assigned to every particular person a certain fixed time or space of Repentance; beyond which period if he delays, and continues in Sin, they conceive that his day of grace is past, and that there remains no further room for his Repentance to be accepted. This, in the event indeed, may seem in some sense to be true, so often as God in judgment cuts off a Sinner in the midst of his Wickedness, or suffers him to become obdurate beyond all hope of recovery. But otherwise, and antecedent to the execution of God's final judgments, there is no ground from these words or any others in Scripture, to suppose that God denies to *any* one, to whom he is pleased to continue life, and health, and the offers of his grace by the ordinary preaching of the Gospel; there is no ground to suppose, that he *denies to any such person*, either the possibility of repenting, or the acceptance of it.

ALL that the Apostle here intends, is, to inform us, that when God affords men
space

space and means of Repentance; when he S E R M.
has given them sufficient proof, of his XI.
care and concern for them; and has made
clear and plain Revelations of his Will;
and enforced his Commandments with
promises of great rewards to Obedience,
and threatnings of severe punishments to
Disobedience; the Apostle then declares,
that it is a thing of infinite hazard and
unspeakable danger, to continue to tempt
God, and to abuse his patience by repeated
provocations. It is a thing of infinite
danger; not only for fear, lest his patience
being at length wearied out, he should
cut them off in his wrath, and assign them
their portion with Unbelievers; but also
lest even without this immediate execution
of the final sentence on *God's part*,
the habit of Sin on our *own part* should
grow and increase into a state of hardness
and insensibility; which is a reprobate
mind, and a condition very little less than
desperate.

AND the greatness of this danger the
Apostle affectionately represents unto us
in this chapter, by the example of the
Israelites in the wilderness; ver. 7: Where-
fore

S E R M. fore as the Holy Ghost saith, cited out of

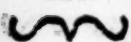
XI. *Pf. xcv; To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; When your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years; Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said; they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways; So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.* The Israelites, after that great deliverance which God had worked for them, by bringing them out of *Egypt* with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm; still continued to provoke him in the wilderness *ten* times; till at last he resolved to cast off that generation utterly, as an incorrigible people; and *swear unto them, that they should not enter into his Rest.* The miracles which they saw, grew by their frequency familiar unto them; The impressions, which the visible power of God made upon their minds, wore out insensibly by degrees; and the good resolutions and vows of better Obedience, which the sight of a new miracle and every strange work produced at the present

sent instant ; quickly grew faint and were forgotten ; And every transgression and rebellion against God, which by the divine mercy and forbearance did not end in their immediate destruction ; instead of putting them upon a stricter care and more diligent obedience for the future, gave them encouragement to venture with less Fear to transgress upon a new temptation ; till at last they arrived at That state, which the Scripture describes by *hardness of heart* ; and which provoked God to pronounce upon them the final and irreversibile sentence, of excluding them for ever out of the promised Land, and swearing that they should wander in the wilderness till they died. This example the Apostle applies to *Us*, in the words of the Text ; *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God ; But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.*

God has delivered *Us* by the Death of Christ, and by the Light of the Gospel, from the power of *Satan* and from the slavery

S E R M.

XI.



slavery of *Sin*; in like manner as he delivered the *Children of Israel* out of the *Egyptian bondage*, by bringing them over the Red sea. He has directed *Us* in our passage through this sinful and corrupt World, by a clear and expresse Revelation of his Will, by the precepts and the Example of his own Son; as he led and guided *them* through the wilderness, by the ministry of *Moses*. He has afforded *us* numberless instances of his Power, in the miracles worked by our Saviour and his Apostles, and in the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost; as he did to *them* in showing wonders by *Moses*, and in the Spirit of Prophecy. He has vouchsafed to encourage *us* with great and glorious promises of an eternal and never-fading inheritance in the heavenly *Canaan*; as he did *Them* with plentiful but earthly and temporal possessions, in the promised land. Finally, he long bears with *our* repeated provocations, and frequently renews that gracious invitation to repentance, which he first made to *us* by his Son; in like manner as his patience and long-suffering, endured *Their* tempting him in the wilderness

derness ten times. If therefore after all S E R M.
this, *we* still take not heed to ourselves, XI.

but continue to harden our hearts, as the *Jews* continued to provoke God in the wilderness; The case is but too plainly parallel; and there is very just reason to fear, that *we* also shall fall after the same example of unbelief; and that God will cut *us* off from our inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, as he swore to *Them* in his wrath, that they should not enter into his kingdom on earth. It is the same Argument, which the same Apostle St. Paul more largely insists upon, in the xth chapter of his first epistle to the *Corinthians*: *Brethren*, saith he, *I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our Fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the Sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea; ver. 1. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness; ver. 5. This he applies to Us Christians, ver. 6; Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. And then he instances in*

SERM. in particulars, ver. 7; *Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them, as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play; i. e. at the dedication of the Golden Calf they rejoiced in their Idolatry with feasting and dancing: Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day twenty three thousand; ver. 8: Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents; ver. 9. And he concludes with repeating the same application again, ver. 11; Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come; wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. In like manner the Apostle St. Jude, ver. 5 of his Epistle; I will therefore, saith he, put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. His meaning is, that Christians being once saved from Death, by the forgiveness of their Sins at Baptism, or whenever they come to Repentance and to the full knowledge*

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ledge of the Truth, ought to take great S E R M. heed, lest returning again into a state of XI. Sin and Debauchery, they be destroyed after the example of the rebellious *Israelites*, and be for ever excluded from the inheritance of God's Children. 'Tis exactly parallel to the occasion and to the words of the Text; *Exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest (like the Jews in the wilderness, whose case the Apostle had been describing in the former part of the chapter,) any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.*

To be hardened, or to harden a man's own heart, signifies, to have laid aside that natural fear and detestation of Sin, which usually at first restrains men from venturing upon great Impieties. It signifies, to have lost or laid asleep that quick Sense, that uneasy Judgment of the Mind and Conscience; which by continually representing to us the baseness and vileness, the danger and evil consequences of Sin, will not permit men, (so long as they give any attention to it,) to become abandoned Sinners. It signifies mens being at length reconciled to Sin; their chusing it with
appro-

S E R M. approbation and deliberate choice; their
 XI. becoming obstinate and incorrigible under
 all the Judgments, and all the Mercies of
 God. Into this deplorable estate, men do
 not ordinarily fall, on a sudden and at
 once; but usually they arrive at it by de-
 grees, being seduced into it insensibly by
 the *enticements*, and drawn on gradually
 by the *deceitfulness of Sin*. And those
 persons, for whom God has worked the
greatest deliverances; to whom he has af-
 forded, the *largest* means of grace; whom
 he has favoured with the *clearest* Revela-
 tions of his Will; (which was the case of
 the *Jews* of old, and is of Christians at
 present;) have of all others the greatest
 reason to take heed lest they fall into this
 deplorable estate: Not only because it is
 in itself most inexcusable, when arrived
 at; and most provoking to God; but also
 because in such persons it very seldom
 leaves room for an escape or remedy;
 Hardness of Heart in a Christian, having
 already overcome, and prevailed against
 all those means of recovery, by which an
 Heathen or ignorant person may, with the
 grace of God, easily be brought to the
 acknow-

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acknowledgment of the Truth. But now S E R M.
by *exhorting one another daily, while it is* XI.

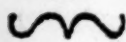
called To-day; before any of us be hard-
ned through the deceitfulness of Sin; it is
easy to prevent falling into so dangerous
a condition. Men are not *at first*, apt to
become hardened Sinners; nor is it easy
for them to despise the dictates of Reason
and Conscience, and with a high hand
to reject all the motives of the Gospel at
once. Few Sinners begin with open con-
tempt of God, and profane mocking and
scoffing at Religion. Few men, in their
first instances of Unrighteousness, venture
upon acts of violent and great oppression.
Few at their first departing from the laws
of Temperance, run immediately into all
extravagancy and excess of riot. But from
carelessness and want of serious considera-
tion, and from neglect of Religion, men
fall insensibly into the madness of impiety
and profaneness. From covetous desires,
and too great a fondness and solicitude
for the things of this life, a commendable
diligence grows up by little and little in-
to a settled worldly-mindedness; and That
betrays men into the use of fraudulent and

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indirect

S E R M. indirect methods ; and then the ways of
 XI. injustice are numberless and without end.



From too free and ready a compliance with the customs of a corrupt world ; men are by degrees despoiled of the guard of their innocence ; and, when once the banks of modesty and good resolution are broken, the habits of debauchery prevail over them, and bear them down irresistibly like a torrent. Small Sins or lower degrees of Unrighteousness, present themselves first, and gain admittance into the hearts of the weak, under the foolish colour of their being but small ones : But when a man has yielded to *one* Sin, because it is but small ; he cannot resist the next, because it is not much greater ; and so by the same Argument, and by the same foolish repeated Temptation, he is by degrees betrayed into the commission of the most enormous crimes : Which, if any man at his first being tempted to transgress, had foretold that he should in process of time be induced to commit, he would have answered, as *Hazael* did to the prophet that foretold his cruelty, *Am I a dog, that I should do this thing?*

But

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But at last those very greatest of crimes S E R M.
make no more dreadful an appearance to XI.
his defiled conscience, than at first the least

Sins did to his innocent and uncorrupted judgment. And when a man has once been guilty of a great enormity, and finds, as he vainly thinks, no great mischief comes of it, because the vengeance of God is not presently executed upon him; he begins to imagine, that a Course of Sin is not really of so deadly and destructive a nature, as the Gospel represents it, and as he himself formerly believed it to be; but he begins to be reconciled to it; and thereupon he commits the second crime with less reluctance than he did the first: And sometimes for no other reason, but because he has done it before. Thus the Habit of Wickedness grows upon him; and besides the proper and immediate temptation to every *act* of Sin, the very *custom* of having done it makes it difficult for him not to do it again. He becomes ashamed to retreat; and has no other arguments, to oppose to the enticements of Sin, and to the importunities of wicked and debauched Company; than

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S E R M. than such as he has already often suffered
 XI. to be baffled and overcome. Thus his Return becomes in a manner as difficult and hopeless, as that the *Ethiopian should ever change his skin, or the leopard his spots.* The Temptations which he could not resist in the days of his greatest strength and best advantages, are become much more powerful by being often complied with; and if ever he recovers himself from the slavery of Sin, it must be by overcoming an enemy grown much stronger, and he at the same time much weaker himself. This is described by the prophet *Jeremy* in a most elegant similitude, ch. xii. ver. 5; *If thou hast run with footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?* The effect of this is, that the Conscience at length becomes seared and insensible; and the heart entirely hardned; and the Sinner has no *Desire* left of recovering his Liberty, any more than he has *Power* to do it: The last and highest degree of this evil state

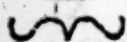
state is, when a man having wholly laid aside S E R M.
the thoughts of reforming *himself*, makes XI.
it his business on the contrary to corrupt
others, and to tempt *them* likewise into
Debauchery; when he makes a *mock* of
Virtue, and *scoffs* at Religion; and *sits*
himself down (as the Psalmist expresses it)
in the seat of the Scornful.

THIS is *being hardened through the de-*
ceitfulness of Sin; This is that evil state,
of which the Apostle directs us to take dili-
gent heed, and *to exhort one another daily*
while it is called To-day, lest any of us be
seduced into any portion or degree of it.
And very great reason there is for so ear-
nest an exhortation; 1st, because of the
extreme danger of this *state* of Hardness,
when arrived at in any considerable de-
gree; and 2^{dly}, because of the deceitful
and insinuating nature of Sin, in the se-
veral *degrees* of approach towards such
a state.

1st; BECAUSE of the extreme danger
of this *state* of Hardness, when arrived at
in any considerable degree. This has been
already spoken to in some measure, in the
general explication of the words of the

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Text. All that I shall add here, is, that the Scripture uses jointly to represent the greatness of this danger, both from the consideration of the extreme difficulty in the nature of the *thing itself*, that men should recover themselves out of such a state; and from the consideration of the high provocation which such men give unto God, to cut them off in his wrath from all further means and space of Repentance. This *latter* consideration, drawn from the danger of *provoking God*, is made use of by the Apostle here in the Text; the exhortation therein contained, being the immediate application of that severe example of God's anger against the *Israelites*, recorded in the verse foregoing, *So I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest*. The *former* consideration drawn from the difficulty of an habitual Sinner's Recovery in the nature of the *thing itself*, is made use of in such places of Scripture, where it is asserted that *it would have been much better for men never to have known the way of righteousness at all, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment*
deli-

delivered unto them; and where their Repentance is described to be in a manner as hopeless, as in the comparison to be joined even with natural Impossibilities. And Both together are used by St Paul in this epistle, ch. x. ver. 26; If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more sacrifice for Sin: that is, God will not afford men any new Revelation which may be of greater efficacy than the present; and all the arguments which the present affords, they have already rejected by sinning wilfully and habitually against the Truth. This is the extreme danger of the state of those men who are hardened in Sin, having made the present Revelation useless, and it being impossible they should have a new one.

2dly; THE other ground of the Apostle's exhortation in the Text, is the deceitful and insinuating nature of Sin, in the several degrees of approach towards this state of Hardness. Exhort one another daily; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin. Did Sin appear to men in its proper colours; and in the days of

S E R M. temptation represent itself truly and in
 XI. the same dress, wherein all men behold it
 in the days of affliction, in the time of
 sickness, and at the approach of death:
 Did Sin always appear to men, what it
 does sometimes; (what it does, whenever
 they consider it with sober thoughts and
 with impartial reason;) to be a thing ab-
 solutely hateful to God; base and vile, in
 the nature of the thing itself; contrary
 to all the reason, and all the wisdom in
 the world; contrary to the judgment of
 our own consciences, and the agreeing o-
 pinion of all the wise and all the good
 men, nay and almost of all the *wicked*
 men also, that ever lived: 'Twould be in
 a manner as impossible for men deliberate-
 ly to chuse it, as to chuse destruction and
 death itself. But Sin, by that deceitful-
 ness which the Apostle speaks of in the
 Text, hides its deformed appearances from
 the eyes of foolish men; and sets before
 them nothing but Pleasures and Profits,
 Joy and Vanity, present Security, and ve-
 ry distant, very uncertain, very remote
 Fears. It abuses their Understandings with
 false Propositions; it seduces their Wills
 with

with alluring Promises of Pleasure and Advantage; it corrupts their Affections with vain appearances and deceitful representations; it prevents mens Reason by surprize and passion, and by giving them no time for sober thoughts and serious consideration. It perswades men that God cannot be so severe as to deny them so many of the pleasures of life; or at least that it cannot be very unsafe for them, to follow the example of the generality of a corrupt world: It perswades them that the consequences of Sin, are not altogether so terrible as the Scripture represents; or that however they shall some way or other escape them. Nay such is the *deceitful* nature of Sin, that it seduces men into the ways of Death, not only by various, but even by *opposite* and *contradictory* insinuations. Sin, they sometimes think, is very *easy* to be avoided, and therefore they may be as careless and negligent as they please; or it is *impossible* to be avoided, and then they think it is to no purpose to endeavour to escape it. God, they sometimes consider, is very *merciful* and *gracious*, and therefore there is no need of any

S E R M.
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S E R M. any strictness in Religion ; or he is a very
 XI. *hard and severe* Judge, and then they fancy it is but lost labour to attempt to please him. *Christ's yoke*, they read, *is easy, and his burden light* ; and therefore they conclude they may safely presume to indulge themselves in Sin ; or his commandments are *very grievous*, and then they fancy 'tis intolerable to flesh and blood to undertake to obey them. Repentance, they have heard, will be accepted at *any* time, and therefore they presume they may safely defer it as long as they please ; or their Sins are gone beyond the measure of the Gospel-pardon, and then they despair that their Repentance should be accepted at all. These and numberless other loose and weak imaginations, are the *deceitful* ways, by which Sin insinuates itself into foolish men ; and by which they by degrees become hardened in it. The very naming of which deceits, is a sufficient demonstration of their weakness and absurdity.

BUT to be still more particular in order to practice. The numberless Deceits and false Notions, by which Sin grows
 and

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and prevails upon men, may almost all be reduced to the three following.

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XI.

1st, S O M E degree of Infidelity or Unbelief.

2^{dly}, P R E T E N C E S of natural Infirmary. And

3^{dly}, F R U I T L E S S Designs of future Repentance.

E I T H E R 1st, Men do not firmly and in earnest believe the great Truths of Religion, that Sin will be finally destructive to them. Or, if they heartily believe this, then

2^{dly}, They deceive themselves by imagining, that their own Sins are not Sins of that deadly nature; but Sins of weakness and pardonable infirmity, Sins small in their own nature, or to be reckoned such upon account of the greatness of the Temptation, or else single Sins, and such as they hope may be made amends for by other virtues. Or, if they cannot satisfy themselves with this, then

3^{dly}, T H E Y deceive themselves with a fruitless design of Repenting at some uncertain time hereafter; which vain resolution is as certainly never executed, as it

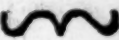
is

S E R M. is at present founded upon a false bottom
 XI. of not repenting immediately.



I. *First*; T H E first great Deceit, by which Sin prevails upon men, is by keeping up in them some degrees of Infidelity or Unbelief. By Infidelity here, I would not be understood to mean Infidelity of open Atheists and professed Unbelievers; but *such* Unbelief, as is to be found in men that pretend to Religion, and who may *seem* perhaps to be religious, not only to *others*, but, by a secret deceitfulness, even to *themselves* also. As it is in itself of great and secret influence, and of very large extent; so it is That which (I say) the Apostle *particularly* aims at, very plainly, in the Text; For thus he expressly introduces it, in the words immediately *foregoing*; ver. 12; *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God; But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin; of That Sin of Unbelief. And afterwards, in the 18th and 19th verses, speaking again of the Israelites in the wilderness,*

derness, (whose example of being hard-
ned through the deceitfulness of Sin, he
in the Text exhorts us to avoid,) he ex-
pressly attributes their Sin to *Unbelief*;
For, having put the question, ver. 11; *To
whom did God swear that they should not
enter into his rest, but to them that belie-
ved not?* He concludes, ver. 19; *So we
see that they could not enter in, because of
Unbelief.* Again, ch. iv. ver. 6 and 11;
*Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must
enter into his rest, and they to whom it
was first preached entred not in because of
Unbelief; Let Us labour therefore to enter
into that rest, lest any man fall after the
same example of Unbelief.* And St Jude
in the passage before-cited, ver. 5 of his
epistle; *I will therefore, saith he, put you
in remembrance, though ye once knew this,
how that the Lord having saved the people
out of the land of Egypt, afterwards de-
stroyed them that believed not.* In all
these places, *Unbelief* is charged upon the
Israelites in the wilderness, as the cause
of their being hardned and rebelling a-
gainst God. Now 'tis evident these men
could not possibly disbelieve, either the
Being,

S E R M.
XI.


SERM. *Being, or the Power, or the Providence*
 XI. of God; because they saw continually
 with their own Eyes, many miraculous
 Instances of his Presence among them.
 'Tis plain therefore, their Unbelief consisted only, in not firmly believing God's *Promises* and *Threatnings*, so as to be influenced and led thereby to an universal obedience: This was *that deceitfulness of Sin*, which hardened *Them*; And the case is the very same *Now*, with most wicked men, who profess themselves Christians, and perhaps really think themselves to be so. They are not Infidels or Unbelievers in the grossest Sense, because they in some measure really believe their Religion *in general*; but they disbelieve *in particular* the heinous and deadly nature of Sin, and the just Severity of God's threatnings against it: Even in the same manner, as our first parent *Adam*, could not possibly but believe in God and fear him *in the general*, and yet weakly suffered himself to be beguiled *in the particular*, so as to imagine that though he *did* eat the forbidden Fruit, yet he should not certainly die. Men will venture upon a course of
 Sin;

Sin; and they *will not* believe that it will S E R M.
eternally destroy them. They *will* fancy XI.
they shall escape, though they know not
upon what grounds; and their Unbelief
is wholly contrary to all Principles of Reason. Such Unbelief as this, is very consistent with a pretence of Religion, not only to *others*, but even to *themselves* also. For *many wicked* men, abhor Infidelity; and really think themselves guilty of nothing less, than of *Unbelief*: And yet, if they would carefully observe and consider the Case, they would find themselves exactly in the same State with the *Jews* in the Wilderness, who for their *Disobedience* are in Scripture ranked among *Unbelievers*.

THE only Way to prevent this Deceit effectually, is to consider frequently, and examine ourselves diligently, and to *exhort one another daily while it is called To day*. Let the Sinner consider seriously with himself; if he were sure God would immediately punish him in *This* World, for his Profaneness and Irreligion and Disregard to the Almighty; would not *This* put him upon more sober Thoughts? Undoubtedly
it

S E R M. it would. Yet if he pretends to be a
 XI. Christian, and to believe the Gospel; (and
 ~~~~~ with *such persons only* I am now arguing;) he cannot but be sensible, that a severer Punishment will certainly overtake him. If his Shame were immediately to be published in the face of the World, would he be guilty of the Vileness he Now secretly commits? Without question he would not. And yet he cannot but know, that the time *will* come, when it shall be openly published before Men and Angels, before all the Inhabitants of Heaven and Earth. If his Fraud and Injustice were by Humane Authority to be punished immediately, without any possible hope of escape, or of evading the power of the Laws; would not This prevail with him to forbear the commission of it? Unquestionably it would: Yet at the same time he cannot but acknowledge, that the Consequence of the Folly he now greedily commits, will in the End be Misery and Death eternal. 'Tis very evident, nothing remains in this case, but to consider seriously the true importance of things; to make use of our Reason, and to shew our  
 selves

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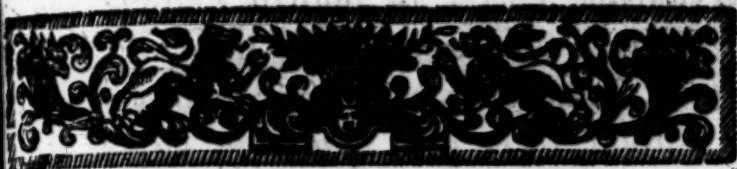
selves men : Not to suffer ourselves to be S E R M.  
imposed upon by vain and empty Delusi- XI.  
ons ; but by immediate and effectual Re-  
pentance and real Amendment of Life, to  
make ourselves Objects of *his* Mercy, from  
whose Justice otherwise there is no esca-  
ping. *Let us exhort one another daily, while  
it is called To-day ; lest any of us be hard-  
ned through the deceitfulness of Sin.*





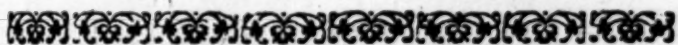
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# SERMON XII.

Of the Deceitfulness of Sin.



HEB. iii. 13.

*But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.*



Y Design at This time from S E R M. these Words, is to endeavour XII. to expose the Weakness of that dangerous Errour, by which men suffer themselves to be perswaded, that tho' they *do* continue in the practice of some Things directly contrary to the Law of God, yet these Transgressions of theirs are but Sins of *Weakness* and natural *Infirmity*; unavoidable

S E R M. voidable effects of human Frailty; and

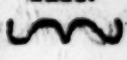
XII. Failings that cannot but meet with Pity and Compassion, with an obvious and easy Pardon. *The good that they would, they do not; but the evil which they would not, that they do.* Now such is the Wickedness and Folly of Mankind, that there is indeed hardly any Sin of so deep a Die, hardly any Impiety so enormous; but either Custom and Habit in the Offender himself, or the Frequency and the Multitude of Examples in Others, will make *some men* look upon it as a very pardonable Infirmity. Besides those who are thus absolutely *hardned in Sin*, there are others that have some degrees of Conscience and Sincerity left, who yet suffer themselves to be imposed upon and drawn into the Commission of many great Sins, by a false Perswasion, that what they do, will be excused under the Notion of human Frailty and natural Infirmity.

THE most dangerous Errours of this kind, are in particular such as follow.

*First*; SOMETIMES men flatter themselves that their *Sins are small*, and of a less heinous Nature than those of which they

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they find some others accused; and that S E R M.  
therefore they are to be allowed for, up- XII.  
on the Stock of natural and unavoidable   
Infirmity. Their Lives perhaps are not  
openly profane and scandalous; they are  
not reproached by the common censure  
of the World; nor guilty of such Crimes,  
as fall usually under the Cognizance of  
human Laws. They thank God they are  
*not as other men are, Extortioners, Unjust,*  
*Adulterers*; as the proud Pharisee in the  
Gospel is described to have behaved him-  
self; St *Luk.* xviii. 11: And because they  
are not the *worst* of men, therefore they  
conclude they may reckon themselves in  
the Number of the *best*. They do not  
perhaps profanely mock and scoff at Re-  
ligion, nor presumptuously blaspheme the  
Name of God; but they are careless and  
negligent in all moral Duties; void of  
Devotion towards God, and of all true  
Concern for promoting his Kingdom of  
Virtue and Righteousness among Men.  
They will not perhaps oppress their neigh-  
bours, by open violences; nor be willing  
to bear the Infamy and Reproach of ma-  
nifest Injustice, But they will be strict



S E R M. and hard beyond measure, in exacting the  
 XII. utmost they have any Right to demand;  
 ~~~~~ unmerciful to those whom Law or Custom, whom the Accidents or Misfortunes of the World have put into their Power; and greatly uncharitable towards them that have need of their Assistance or Relief. They will not perhaps *murder* their Brother; but they will requite him with very ill offices, and bear continual grudges and hatred towards him. They will not perhaps be intemperate in instances of general Disreputation, or to degrees of great Enormity, and unavoidable Scandal: But where a general corruption of manners; the licentiousness of a debauched Age; or the loose Notions of vain and careless men, have made a Vice customary; there they will look upon such a Vice, as but a small failing; as an Allowance which ought to be made in course, to their Age, their Employment, or their Company. Thus *Young* persons are too apt to imagine, that the Sins and Impurities of Youth, shall hardly be mentioned in Judgment against them; and *old* Persons, that the Covetousness, Uneasiness, and Peevishness

ness of Age, shall upon That account be S E R M.
excused as unavoidable Infirmities; and XII.
men of *much business* and commerce in
the World, are apt to flatter themselves,
that some kinds of Deceit and fraudulent
Dealings, will be lookt upon as very small
Faults, and easily pardonable upon the
Necessity of their Affairs.

Secondly; A T other times men per-
swade themselves that their Sins will be
excused as Infirmities only, upon account
of the *greatness of the Temptation* that
overcomes them. Their Passion is so
transporting, that they *cannot forbear* pro-
faning the Name of God; or their Cus-
tom of doing it, is grown to such a Ha-
bit, that they are hardly sensible whether
they do it or no. Their Anger is so ungo-
vernable, that they cannot forbear reviling
or injuring their Brother, upon the least
Provocation. Their Appetites are so vio-
lent, that to restrain them from forbidden
instances, and keep them within the
bounds of Reason and Religion, is like
*cutting off a right hand or plucking out a
right Eye*. The Company and Acquaint-
ance they are engaged in, make some Vices

S E R M. appear so fashionable, that they are ashamed to forsake them; or their business and employment in the World, makes other Vices so necessary, that they think it is almost impossible to prosper, or to stand upon the level with other men, if they be more conscientious than They, and will not venture upon the same indirect practices.

Thirdly; O T H E R S think they shall be accepted because of their *good resolutions*; and that their Vices are of no worse kind than pardonable Infirmities, because they disapprove and condemn them themselves. They do not commit them with full choice, and with a perfect Complacency; but are overcome as it were, and consent with an unwilling Willingness: *The Good that they would, they do not: But the Evil which they would not, That They do.* Their Judgment is on the side of Virtue and Goodness, while their Actions are vicious; and they wish they were better, and more religious men than they are. This self-condemnation they take for a certain Mark of the Sincerity of their Heart; And 'tis an Errour which has spread dangerously

gerously by a great Misinterpretation of S E R M.
the viith Chapter of the Epistle to the XII.
Romans; where the Description the A-
postle gives of the Struggles of Consci-
ence which an habitual Sinner feels, has
frequently been alledged as a Sign or Mark
of the most perfect Christian.

Fourthly; SOME men think, that be-
cause they *are not* guilty in *all* or in *many*
instances of Vice, therefore they may
safely esteem themselves good Christians.
They indulge themselves perhaps but in
one single beloved instance of unrighteous-
ness; and this, they hope, may be made
amends for by other Virtues. The Scrip-
ture itself tells them, *There is no man*
righteous, no not one, and, that in many
things we offend all. They can recollect
that some of the greatest Men, whose His-
tory is recorded in Holy Writ, have fal-
len in single instances into great Crimes;
and, much more, *Themselves* (they think)
may be allowed to have their Infirmities.
They presume they can apply to them-
selves many promises, where assurance of
eternal Life is given to particular Virtues.
Their *Faith* they are sure is unshaken,
though

S E R M.

XII.

though their *Obedience* is very defective; and they remember our Saviour's words, *that whosoever believeth on him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.* Or their *Repentance* is perpetual, though it never ends in *Amendment*; and they read, that to *Repentance* is always promised *Remission of Sins.* Or they depend on some *other single Duty*: They Pray to God; They Fear him; They trust in him; They love him, they think; though they are resolved to be excused from keeping *some* of his Commandments; And very great promises they are sure are annexed in Scripture, to *every one* of these Duties.

THESE are some of the principal and most dangerous Deceits, by which Sin imposes upon men, and prevails in their Practice, under pretences of Weakness and natural *Infirmity.*

IN order to show the Danger and Falseness of every one, of which Deceits in particular, it may be proper to premise,

1st; SOME general Marks, of what must by *no means* be allowed to be ranked under this Head of Sins of Infirmity.

2dly; AN account of what *is* truly and properly such. And from thence, in the

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3d place, IT will be easy to make appear in particular, that none of the fore-mentioned Instances can with any just reason expect to be excused under that Name.

I. *First*; As to the *general* Marks, of what must *by no means* be allowed to be ranked under this Head of Sins of Infirmity; we may safely affirm;

1st, THAT nothing can reasonably be excused under that Name, which at the Time of its Commission is *known* to be a Sin. To do an action, which at the same time that the person commits it, he knows or believes to be sinful; is the proper Essence of presumptuous Sin. And though there *are* indeed great differences, and various degrees, even of such presumptuous offences; from whence arise proportionable Extenuations of Guilt; yet every Action of This kind, is, in its Nature, evidently, in some degree, a presumptuous transgression. It plainly argues a Contempt of God, a Neglect of his Authority,

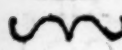
S E R M. rity, or a disbelief of his promises and
 XII. threats. 'Tis with a clear and determined
 Choice setting aside all the Motives of the
 Gospel, and directly preferring (at least
at That particular time) the pleasures of
 Sin before the hopes of Heaven.

2dly; N O T H I N G can justly be called
 a Sin of Infirmary, which is contrary to
 the express Letter of any of the Com-
 mandments. The reason is; because no
 man *can* be ignorant, that such an Action
 is a Sin; or if he be ignorant of it, it
 must be such an ignorance, as is itself a
 Sin of presumptuous Neglect; a wilful
 and affected ignorance; an obstinate refu-
 sing to receive Instruction; a shutting his
 Eyes against the Sun, and deliberately
 choosing Darkness rather Light. None of
 which Circumstances affording Any man-
 ner of reasonable Excuse; 'tis evident
 (however otherwise a careless and debauch-
 ed World may be apt to judge,) 'tis evident,
 I say, that No action ought to be esteem-
 ed by us as a mere Frailty, which is con-
 trary to the plain Letter of any of those
 Commandments, which God has declared
 to be the conditions of Salvation; or which
 is

is clearly in the number of those Works S E R M.
of the Flesh, concerning which St Paul XII.
bids us *beware that no man deceive us with*
vain words; for that they who do such
things, shall not inherit the kingdom of
God. Scoffers at Religion, and Profaners
of the Name of God by oaths and im-
precations; Practisers of Injustice and Un-
righteousness, Fraud and Deceits, in their
dealings one with another; the unholy and
the impure, the drunkard and the forni-
cator, the riotous and debauched; would
do well to consider the expressness and
earnestness of this Declaration of the A-
postle; and how little reason they have
to hope, that their Faults shall be excused
among the Frailties and Infirmities of hu-
man nature.

3dly; NOTHING will admit of a just
and sufficient Excuse upon the account of
Infirmity, which a man before-hand con-
siders and deliberates with himself, whe-
ther it be a Sin or no. The reason is;
because Knowledge and Deliberation, im-
ply Will and Choice; And, as One's chu-
sing what he fully *knows* to be unlawful,
is the *highest* aggravation of presumptu-
ous

SERMON. ous Sin; so his consenting to commit

XII.  what upon Deliberation appears *very suspicious and doubtful* to him whether it be lawful or no, is still always some degree of wilful Sin; because 'tis knowingly and deliberately venturing upon that, which he has reason to fear will not be pleasing to God; For, *whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin.* And though in all other things God is by no means severe, but pities and compassionates us and makes all possible allowances; considering that we are but Dust, but frail and very fallible Creatures; yet in the matter of *Sincerity*, of an upright and honest Intention; in this *one* particular he makes no abatements. I am in the

II. *Second* place to give some account what *is* truly and properly a Sin of Infirmary, and may justly and reasonably hope to be excused as such. And

1st; A SIN of Infirmary is such a Failing, as proceeds from some *excusable ignorance*. Not from such ignorance as is totally and absolutely unavoidable; for in That case, the action is not any Sin at all: Nor yet on the other side, must it proceed from

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from wilful and grossly careless Ignorance, S E R M.
such as That always is which betrays men XII.
into any great and scandalous Crime; But
'tis what proceeds from *such* Ignorance, as
might indeed possibly in every particular
instance with great and constant Care have
been avoided; and yet in general and upon
the whole, through the Fallibility and
Weakness of our Understandings, the
Number of prejudices by which our Judg-
ments are disturbed, and the obscurity and
difficulty which often happens to be in
things themselves; hardly any man can be
so diligent and cautious, as constantly to
avoid it. In great Crimes, and plain
Transgressions of the Commands of God,
this Rule (as has been before said) can
have no place; because no man can in-
nocently or excusably be ignorant, of the
great and most important instances of his
Duty. But the Plea of Ignorance must
always be understood to take place *so far*
only, as the Ignorance was not owing to
the ill Disposition and direct Choice of
the Will.

2dly; A SIN of Infirmary may also be
such a Failing, as is owing to *unavoidable*
Surprise:

SERM. *Surprize*: By unavoidable Surprize, meaning not that which is strictly and absolutely unavoidable; but What, morally speaking, considering the Multitude and Variety of the Circumstances of human Life, the Indisposition of our Minds at certain Times, and the Suddenness of Objects striking upon our Passions; cannot *always* be avoided, even by those who *always* endeavour to please God. Of this kind are many smaller Irregularities of Passion, Wandrings of Thoughts in Prayer, careless and inconsiderate Words, vain Thoughts; Desires and Inclinations to certain sinful Actions, ineffectual indeed and not proceeding to the Commission of the Crimes themselves, but yet entertained with too many degrees of Approbation.

THESE, and such like, are the Failings and Infirmities, incident more or less even to the best of men. Concerning which St *John* affirms, that *if we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*; 1 Joh. i. 8: and St *James*, ch. iii. ver. 2; *In many things we offend all; If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man*: and *Job*, ch. ix. ver. 1; *How should*

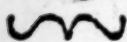
Should man be just with God? If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me. SERM. XII.

And the Scripture gives us Instances accordingly, of *Noah's* being surprized into an unhandsome excess; of *Moses* himself speaking unadvisedly with his lips; of *Elisha's* falling into an undecent discontent; of our *Saviour's Disciples* weakly striving for the preeminence; of *St Paul's* speaking evil of the High Priest with too sudden a transport; and the like. All which are *therefore* to be reckoned in the number of mere Failings and Infirmities; because they were owing, not so much to deliberate choice, as to unthinking Surprise.

HAVING thus briefly given some general Marks of what truly and properly are Sins of Infirmary, and what on the contrary may *by no means* be allowed to be excused as such; it will from hence be easy in the

III. *Third* place, to make appear in particular, the Weakness and Falsity of those Deceits, by which I have before shown that Sin usually imposes upon corrupt Men, and makes them without reason expect

SERM. that their Crimes should be excused under
 XII. the Name of Infirmities. And



1st; WHEREAS Some flatter themselves, that because their Sins are (as they fancy) *small*, and of a less heinous nature than many other mens; that therefore they may be esteemed as no other than mere human Frailties; 'tis evident from what has been said, that this is only true in such cases, where the thing proceeds from some considerable degree either of Ignorance or Surprize. For otherwise, though the matter of the Offence may in itself possibly seem to be but small, yet if it be committed knowingly and wilfully, perversely, and with deliberate Choice, it has the nature of a presumptuous Sin. For 'tis not so much the outward action, as the disposition of the Heart, that is looked upon by God; And he that with a high hand transgresses a plain and positive Precept, though the instance may seem perhaps in itself to be of but small importance, yet he manifestly despises the Authority of the Law-giver, and is guilty of a professed Contempt of God. For this reason, in the history of the *Israelites* passing

Of the Deceitfulness of Sin.

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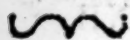
passing through the Wilderness, the Man S E R M.
that did but *gather sticks* upon the Sabbath- XII.
day; because he did it presumptuously,
and as it were in defiance of the Law
newly given; was by a singular Severity
commanded to be *put to Death*; Numb.
xv. 35. Which shows abundantly, how
little reason any one has to excuse his
Sin upon account of what He may call
the Smallness of the *Matter*, when 'tis
great and wilful and presumptuous in the
Choice. *He that despiseth even small things,*
says the wise Son of *Sirach*, *shall fall by*
little and little. The Anger which *Cain*
causelessly conceived against his more
righteous Brother, and which he indulged
and cherished as unreasonably, as he at
first entertained it; ceased not 'till it end-
ed in shedding his Brother's innocent blood.
The Liberty which *David* negligently al-
lowed himself beyond the bounds
of true Virtue, grew up into Adultery and
Murder. And the connivance which (we
read) *Solomon* gave to the idolatrous Wor-
ship of his Wives, concluded in with-
drawing his own heart from the Service
of the One only true God.

SERM. 2dly; WHEREAS others flatter themselves that their Sins may be excused under the Notion of Infirmity, upon account of the *greatness of the Temptations* by which they are overcome, and which they think the Weakness of their Nature is not able to resist; This also, from what has been already explained, appears to be too vain and groundless a Deceit. For, tho' the righteous Judge of the whole Earth, pities, and will make all equitable and reasonable Allowances for the Difficulties of every particular person's circumstances; yet in all plain transgressions, it cannot be esteemed a sufficient Apology, to alledge I have been strongly tempted. Bearing up against Temptations, and prevailing over them, is the very Thing wherein the whole Life of Religion consists; 'Tis the Trial which God puts upon us *in this World*, by which we are to make evidence of our Love and Obedience to him, and of our Fitness to be Members of his Kingdom. *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things*, saith our Saviour; *not he who being tempted, is overcome and falls away.* Were Temptations

to great Sins, (even humanly or morally speaking) irresistible, this would indeed justly plead our excuse, both before God and Man; *But God is faithful who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* And this being the case; 'tis too great a disparagement of Religion, and altogether destructive of the Necessity of a Holy Life; to suppose that great Sins and Debaucheries shall therefore be excused as mere Frailties and Infirmities, because men were strongly tempted to commit them. No: *This is the race that God has set before us to run; This is the warfare which God has commanded us to fight, and to overcome in it;* And the Rewards and Threatnings of the Gospel are all intended for this very end, to enable us to conquer and to prevail over such Temptations. In the days of Prosperity and Mirth, men are very apt indeed to put these Thoughts of future Rewards and Punishments far from them in their *imagination*s; And This makes Temptations strong, that they cannot overcome them.

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But in *reality*, we are sure Eternity can never be very far distant from us, though we cannot at any time know but it may be very near. The Motives of Religion ought therefore at all times to have so much Influence upon us, as to prevail over the Temptations of Sin; and 'tis not our Infirmary, but our Wickedness, if they do it not. Our Passions, and Appetites; our Employment, and our Company; our Youth, or our Age; the Examples of those we converse with, or the fashionable and customary Vices of our Country; These, and such like, are the proper Temptations, which 'tis the *business* of Religion and the proper Trial of our Virtue to overcome; and if our Passions hurry us, or our Company seduce us, or the Customs and Fashion of the World lead us carelessly and inconsiderately into the ways of Destruction; 'tis not our excuse, but our condemnation, that *we have followed a Multitude to do evil*; that we have been prevailed upon more by the Shame of Men, than by the Fear of God; or that our Affection and Love to Sin has been so strong, that our Reason and Religion

ligion has not been able to govern and subdue our Appetites. S E R M.
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3dly ; W H E R E A S Others imagine that they shall be accepted because of their *good resolutions* ; and that their Vices are of no worse kind than pardonable Infirmities, because they *disapprove and condemn them themselves* : This likewise, 'tis evident is a very great deceit ; and indeed not an extenuation, but an aggravation of Sin. For what can be more absurd, than that one should think it to be an excuse, that he Sinned *against* his Conscience ; or hope that God will therefore *not* condemn him, because he is forced to condemn himself ? When a Man approves in his mind the Law of God, and continually makes good resolutions to obey it ; and yet never puts these good resolutions in practice, but is constantly overcome by the Temptations of Sin ; 'tis true, such a person has a root and foundation of Hope in him, which may at length produce a real and effectual Amendment : But if his Sense of what is Right, and his intentions of following it, never come to any Effect ; 'tis not the Infirmary of his Nature, but

S E R M. the Weakness of his Virtue, and the
 XII. Strength of his Love to Sin, that is the
 cause of his Destruction. The Scripture
 describing such persons, calls them the
Servants of Sin, St Joh. viii. 34; and the
Servants of Corruption, 2 Pet. ii. 19: and
 declares that *the End of that Service is*
death, Rom. vi. 16; and that *no regenerate*
person can be in that State; 1 Joh. iii. 9.

THIS viith chapter of the Epistle to
 the *Romans*, supposing St *Paul* speaks here
 of *himself*, and that in his own person he
 describes the State of a good Christian;
 would indeed contenance those, who think
 good Resolutions will make amends for
 their ill deeds. *But if working all man-*
ner of Sin, ver. 8; *if being in a state of*
Death, ver. 9 and 10; *if being sold un-*
der Sin, ver. 14; *if Sinning habitually a-*
gainst Conscience, ver. 15; *if being in cap-*
tivity to the law of Sin, ver. 23; *if being*
in that wretched condition which Christ
came to deliver men from, ver. 24, 25; *but*
which the Law could not do, in that it was
weak thro' the Flesh, ch. viii. ver. 3; If all
 these things, I say, be marks, not of a
 good Christian, but of a very bad man
 and

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and habitual Sinner; then 'tis evident, S E R M.
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that *St Paul* does not here speak of himself, nor of any regenerate person; but of one that is yet in the contrary State: And consequently no Apology can be drawn from any passages in this Chapter, for such persons as sometimes make indeed good Resolutions, but nevertheless live on still in Sin, and never put those good resolutions in Practice.

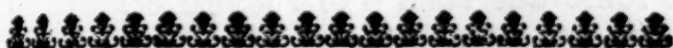
4thly and *lastly*; WHEREAS Others vainly hope, that because they avoid many sorts of Sins, and are not willing to run into *every* Kind of Unrighteousness, that therefore their beloved *single Sins* shall be esteemed as natural Infirmities only, and be compensated by other Virtues; 'tis manifest from what has been already said, that This also is a very dangerous and fatal Delusion. For *every* wilful Sin proceeds from the same root of bitterness, an unbelieving or disobedient heart: And he that habitually indulges any *one* beloved Lust, though he is not indeed so *great* a Sinner in *degree*, as he who profligately gives himself up to work all *manner* of Wickedness; yet he is as truly and really
a pre-

S E R M. a presumptuous Sinner; and consequently
XII. is in as *certain* a State of Death, tho' not
liable to the same *Degree* of Punishment.
No man can live wilfully in the practice
of *any* known Sin, without bidding defiance
to the Law and to the Authority of God: And therefore St *James* declares,
that *he who keepeth the whole Law, and offendeth in one Point, is guilty of all:*
And *David* having transgressed in *one* great
instance, repented all his Life, with the
Severity of the repentance of an habitual
Sinner: And St *Paul* exhorts, that with
more especial care we avoid the Sin,
whatever it be, that most *easily besets us*;
as being the principal part of that race,
which the Providence of God has set
before us, to be run with patience and
with religious fear.



SERMON XIII.

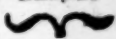
Of the Deceitfulness of Sin.



HEB. iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.



THE great Deceits by which Sin S E R M. imposes upon Men, are these **XIII.**
Three: 

1st; SOME degrees of Infidelity or Unbelief: Men will not believe Sin to be of so deadly a nature, or the Judgments of God to be so severe, or the Execution of them so certain, as they are usually represented.

2^{dly};

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2dly; PRETENCES of natural Frailty and Infirmary; which they hope will excuse or at least in great measure extenuate their Faults; And every man is apt to look upon his own particular Sins and Vices, whatever they are; to be of such a nature, as may be capable of excuse upon this account. Or,

3dly; A Fruitless Design of repenting at some uncertain Time hereafter.

I SHALL at this time consider only the last of these; which *as it is* of all others the most common and the most fatal Deceit, so it deserves to be considered with the greatest carefulness, and reproved with the most earnest zeal. *To-day*, says the Spirit of God, *if ye will hear his voice*; embrace the opportunity while it is present; *because* we know not how long such opportunities may be offered to us, and how fatal may be the consequence even of the shortest delay.

ALL men who pretend to believe a God and a *future state*, and make Any Profession of Religion at all, *must* found their hopes of Salvation on the *conditions* of that Religion, of which they make such

such Profession. Now the great conditions, which the *Gospel* proposes to us, by which we must be saved; are *Faith and Repentance*. Now to them who are born in a Christian Country, and from the beginning instructed in the great Truths of the *Gospel*, the Difficulty does not so much lie in *believing* aright, as in *practising* suitably to so excellent a Belief. We carelessly suffer ourselves to be corrupted in our *Manners*, and the Habits of Sin to prevail in our *Lives*; and then the difficulty lies in the practice of Repentance, which is Amendment and Reformation. The *Obligation* to Repentance, is so necessary and so evident, that no Sinner thinks he can be saved without Repenting at all: Yet to repent worthily, is so uneasy a Duty; that men seek all possible ways to evade doing it effectually; and are willing to be imposed upon in this matter, by any of the deceitful representations of Sin. Vicious and debauched minds please themselves with considering, that Repentance, as 'tis the indispensable condition, so 'tis also the *certain* means of Obtaining Forgiveness. Upon this the
Person

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Person flatters himself, that how wicked soever he is at present, yet, if he repent hereafter, he shall still be secure. That he *shall* repent hereafter, he makes no question; because such a resolution is indispensably necessary to maintain his present Peace, and secure his future Hopes: And when it may be too late, 'tis probable he *will* repent indeed. However in the mean time he goes on securely in his Sin; and his Disease is therefore the more in danger to prove mortal, because he neglects it upon a presumption, that he can recover from it when he pleases.

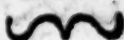
Now before I enter upon the many *particular* Arguments, which show the extreme danger and desperate unreasonableness of mens delaying to reform their manners; it may not be improper to premise the two following Observations.

First; T H A T such Persons would do well to consider *in general*, that if their reasoning was true, and not some way or other an Imposition upon themselves, the whole Design of the Gospel might be subverted, and there would be no indispensable Necessity of a Virtuous Life. For
if

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if a man may safely continue in Sin at present; and there be no danger in so doing, because he intends to repent hereafter; and that then it shall certainly be as well with him, as if he never sinned; it will necessarily follow, that there is no absolute and indispensable Necessity of a virtuous Life at all; and so the great and principal design of the whole Gospel, may be evaded at once. Now because this evidently is the greatest disparagement to Religion in the world, and overthrows the main End and Intent of the Gospel; men have great reason to suspect, that they fatally deceive and *impose* upon themselves, when they defer their Amendment; and that their danger must some way or other be greater, than they are apt to apprehend. The Apostle bids us *take heed, that we be not deceived*; and assures us that *God will not be mocked*; but that *whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap*. Now they who wilfully continue in the practice of known Sin, with design to enjoy the pleasures of it at present, and yet at last to secure Heaven to themselves by a late Repentance; are certainly, if there be any
such

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S E R M. such thing in the world, guilty of endeavouring to mock God ; and of endeavouring to delude him, by obtaining Happiness without obeying his Commandments, and securing to themselves the rewards of Holiness without the trouble of practising it. If therefore it be certain that God will not be mocked ; such men have great reason to fear, that how plausible soever their Hopes may be, yet God whom they contemn, will by some means or other disappoint them ; and either deny them the grace, or the Time of Repentance ; or not *accept* their Professions of it, when 'tis too late for them to evidence their Sincerity by the performance of their Duty.

Secondly ; A N O T H E R Observation I would here premise, is ; that what shall be said upon This subject, does not at all relate to the Frailties and Infirmities of such persons, as sincerely endeavour in the general course of their lives to obey the will of God ; but concerns only such, as are wilfully and deliberately vicious and debauched.

T H I S being premised *in general* ; I proceed now to lay before you briefly some
of

of the principal Arguments in *particular*, S E R M.
which show the extreme danger and def- XIII.
perate folly of mens continuing in Sin,
and delaying the Reforming of their Lives.
*But exhort one another daily, while it is
called To-day, lest any of you be hardned
through the deceitfulness of Sin. And*

I. *First*; 'T I S obvious that no man is
sure of Life, for so much as the space
of one single moment. The Experience
of every day, affords us abundant proof,
that even *without* God's interposing in the
way of a miraculous judgment, a Sinner
may easily be surprized with the arrest of
Death; and, in the midst of his Security,
have his Hopes cut off for ever; and find
his condition determined, without possibi-
lity of alteration, to an endless Eternity.
Every thing *within* us, and every thing
without us; every thing that is *hurt-*
ful, and every thing that is *beneficial*
to us; may prove the occasion of our
Fall. The Seeds of a mortal Disease,
may already be formed in our Bodies;
and Millions of external Accidents, are
perpetually ready to destroy us. If the
guilt of wilful Sin be upon us, we are
actually under the Sentence of God's
V O L. IX. U Wrath;

S E R M. Wrath; and if in that state we be called
 XIII. to appear in judgment, that Sentence will
 become irreverfible by being immediately
 executed upon us. The Danger that every
 wilful Sinner, that every Debauchee is
 perpetually in upon this account, is greater
 than can be expreffed; and, if they
 were duly fenfible of it, greater than could
 be fupported: In the time of Sicknefs and
 at the *apparent* approach of Death, it be-
 comes wholly intolerable, and fills the
 fouls of the moft hardned Sinners, with
 inexpressible Amazement. The Danger
 is really the fame, how little foever fen-
 fible they be of it; the Danger (I fay) is
really the fame, to a great number of Sin-
 ners, in the midft of their Health and
 Mirth; and *may*, for ought they can tell,
 be fo equally to them *All*: Death being
 every day very near to fome of *them* that
 leaft expect it; and no fingle Sinner can
 have any fecurity that it is not fo Now to
 Him; and if it be, he without remedy
 perishes for ever. We all ftand upon the
 brink of a Precipice, where the ground is
 every moment finking under our feet;
 and no Caution, no Prudence, no Fore-
 fight

fight of ours, can possibly prevent it. For SERM. XIII.
man also, as Solomon expresses it, knoweth not his Time; But as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them; Eccles. ix. 12. Sinners vainly boast themselves of Tomorrow, and flatter themselves with Hopes of becoming more religious after many years; But, alas, they know not what a Day, what an Hour, what a Moment may bring forth. The very next Night may put a Period to their Hopes for ever; and when they lie down to sleep in a careless security, they may at their awakening find themselves in a portion of eternal misery. Our Saviour warns us of this, in the Parable of the Rich man; who when he had said to himself, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;* God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?* Luk. xii. 20. Upon which, our Lord adds an earnest exhortation to all his

S E R M. Disciples, ver. 35; *Let your loins be gird-*
 XIII. *ed about, and your lights burning, and ye*
 yourselves like unto men that wait for their
 Lord. And ver. 39; *This know, that if*
the good man of the house had known what
hour the Thief would come, he would have
watched, and not have suffered his house to
be broken through; Be ye therefore ready
also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour
that ye think not. And again, ver. 45;
If that servant say in his heart, My Lord
delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat
the men-servants and maidens, and to eat
and drink and be drunken; The Lord of
that servant will come in a day when he
looketh not for him, and at an hour that he
is not aware; and will cut him asunder,
and will appoint him his portion with
the Unbelievers. The same caution he re-
peats by St John, in his epistle to the
church of Sardis, Rev. iii. 3; If thou shalt
not watch, I will come on thee as a Thief,
and thou shalt not know what hour I will
come upon thee. And St Paul in 1 Th.
v. 2, very emphatically; For yourselves
know perfectly that the day of the Lord so
cometh, as a Thief in the Night; For when
they

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they shall say, *Peace and Safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape: Therefore let us not sleep, saith he, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.* SERM.
XIII.

II. Secondly; ANOTHER Argument I would urge upon this head, is as follows.

VIRTUE, or *Holiness of Life*, is the absolutely necessary and indispensable condition, upon which alone the Gospel affords men any hopes of Salvation, and any title to the promises of God. *Except your righteousness, saith our Saviour, exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven; Matt. v. 20.* And he declares that *at the day of judgment he will bid to depart from him all the workers of iniquity*, whatever pleas they may otherwise make of their having been his Disciples; *Matt. vii. 21.* And St Paul expressly assures us, that *without Holiness, no man shall see the Lord; Heb. xii. 14.* And having instanced in such practices as are contrary to Righteousness and true Holiness, he tells his

S E R M. Converts with great earnestness, and repeats it again and again, that *they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; Gal. v. 21. And indeed the whole Scripture throughout, constantly represents it as the great, the indispensable end, and chief design of the Gospel, to oblige us to *put off the old man, to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds; to purify ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit; and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.*

Now This is certainly a work of Time and Care, an employment that well deserves to be the business of a whole *Life*; and which They who begin the soonest, and make the fewest delays, will find they have not too much time to finish. And if a virtuous *Life* be the only and indispensable condition of the Gospel, nothing can be more vain, than to expect that God will instead thereof accept a few empty resolutions, and fruitless professions of ineffective Sorrow, at the approach of Death. To go on at present in a course of Debauchery, or in the practice of any
known

known Vice, upon such an expectation; S E R M.
is wholly to take away the necessity of XIII.
virtuous Living; and Obedience to God's
Commands cannot be so indispensable, as
both Scripture and Reason represent it, if
it matters not *how long* it be, before we
set about it.

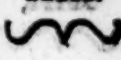
SUCH Imaginations cannot proceed,
but from very evil causes and principles,
from the gall of bitterness, and from the
bond of iniquity; from such Principles, as
are altogether Inconsistent with Sincerity;
inconsistent with Any Sincerity even of
that very *design* of Repenting hereafter,
upon which all the Hope of delaying Sin-
ners are founded. For how can a man
with any Sincerity *design* to *repent* of That
Action, which yet at the present he *re-*
solves to commit? How can he intend
seriously to wish That undone hereafter,
when it shall be impossible to undo it;
which now, while it *is* in his power, he
will by no means be perswaded to forbear
doing? What greater possible mockery
can any man be guilty of, both before
God and Man? 'Tis directly contradic-
tory to the very nature and essence of

SERM. Repentance, to design to Repent hereafter, and not do it Now. For what is Repentance, but a Change of Mind, a Sorrow for what is past, a desire of undoing it as far as is possible, and an acting in a contrary manner for the time to come? Now how can a man intend to change his mind? How can he resolve, that for the time to come he will think *That* foolish and unfit to be chosen; which yet at present he *will* obstinately choose? If he thinks a thing fit to be done Now; how can he intend hereafter to think it was unfit? And if he designs hereafter to think it was unfit, how is it possible for him now to think it fit and reasonable? A man may always indeed upon better information, reasonably change his Mind; and it may be a great instance of Wisdom, to disapprove and repent hereafter, of what he ignorantly and foolishly chuses Now: But to intend Now, at the very time that he does the Act, to disapprove and repent of it hereafter; this is clearly as direct an Inconsistency, as that a person should be of two contrary Opinions at one and the same time. Whoever repents worthily,

worthily, would give all the World, if it SERN.
were in his Power, that he had never for- XIII.
feited the Favour of God: And therefore
that any man should *sincerely* intend such
a Repentance, at the same time that he
deliberately chooses, upon some trivial
temptation, to offend and *provoke* the Al-
mighty; is altogether impossible to be
conceived. 'Tis like a Traveller's going
out of his way on purpose, that he may
have the trouble of returning into it a-
gain; 'Tis as absurd, as if a man should
choose to take *poison*, on purpose that he
might run the hazard of recovering his
Health by an Antidote; or that a Sea-
faring person should desire to have his
Ship cast away, on purpose that he might
have a possibility of being saved upon a
Plank; and that even This Plank itself
he would defer as long as possible, before
he would lay hold of it. The Folly in
both cases is equally great, and the Choice,
were there no Blindness and Deceit in the
case, is equally impossible. 'Tis very evi-
dent therefore, that in habitual debauched
Sinners, all designs of future Repentance,
are mere cheats and delusions, and not
any

S E R M. any hearty intention of becoming truly
 XIII. virtuous and religious at all. But

III. *Thirdly*; T H I S is not all. For, supposing there were *no* deceit in this matter; and that such delays were consistent (as they manifestly are not) with a real, sincere and hearty intention of Repenting at some time or other; yet That intention in all probability will never be put in practice; because there can be no reason for continuing in Sin at present, but what will perpetually grow stronger against forsaking it hereafter. The common and most *usual* reason of delay, in those who pretend to any design of reforming at all; is the difficulty of doing That at present in the midst of Temptation, which they hope they shall hereafter be able to do more easily, when the Temptation is removed. But this is a very great and fatal mistake. For whatever Difficulties they are at present sensible of; will either increase continually in proportion to the delay; or new and greater Difficulties will arise in their stead. Custom itself becomes a Temptation, even upon its own account; and (besides all *other* Tempta-

Temptations to Sin,) the very Habit of S E R M.
having frequently done any thing, makes XIII.
it perpetually more and more difficult 
(even separate from all other Temptations,) to break off the Practice. The
Accidental Changes of Age and Company,
and other Circumstances of Life, may indeed *vary* mens Temptations; but they
seldom or never *remove* them: And the
Mind that is so much under the Power
and Dominion of Sin, that it cannot think
of leaving it, so long as the particular
Temptation remains; may, upon the ceasing
of That Temptation, alter perhaps
the Instances of its Folly and Wickedness,
but will not the more easily return into
the ways of Virtue and true Wisdom:
Even as the Matter of a *bodily* Disease, by
shifting from one part to another, may
perhaps vary the Symptoms of its malignity
and danger; but does not therefore
make the person at all the nearer to
Health, unless it be expelled out of the
whole Body. On the contrary: As the
Diseases of the Body grow so much the
more dangerous and difficult to cure, by
how much the longer the Remedy is neglected,

SERM.

XIII.

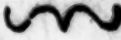
lected, and deferred to be applied; so, to Recover the Mind out of a state of Wickedness, is always so much the more difficult, by how much the longer the Amendment has been put off. For though perhaps the *particular* instance of the Temptation may be changed, yet the Power of Sin in *general* is unquestionably increased, and the Heart more and more enslaved with unrighteous Practices, and further estranged continually from God and Goodness. By *continuance* in Sin, men grow more and more *hardened* through the deceitfulness thereof; both by the just Judgment of God, and by the natural Consequence of the Thing itself. Their Conscience becomes stupified and insensible, their Judgment depraved and incapable of distinguishing things rightly, their Understanding darkened and blinded, their Mind alienated from God and Virtue, their Will and Affections more and more biassed and inclined to Evil, the Assistance of the Grace of God, every day diminished; and in every respect, the longer Men delay, the more they incapacitate themselves for that indispensable work, which,

if

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if it be not perfected, they must perish for ever. They too often bring themselves at last into that sad and deplorable condition, which the Apostle describes by being dead *in Trespases and Sins*; that is, having so far lost all sense of Virtue and Religion, as that there is little more hope of ever recovering them, than there is of bringing even the dead to Life. Concerning These it is, that the Prophet elegantly complains, Jer. xiii. 23; *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.* And the Wise man, Eccl. i. 15; *That which is crooked, cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting, cannot be numbered.* If by any means such persons come at any time to be thoroughly awakened into a sense of their Danger, and to see the absolute necessity of changing their course of Life immediately; yet their resolutions are weak and unstable as water, and their hope apt to be wavering and without any certain foundation. They are sure, that God, as well as their own Conscience, is very justly angry; The number and heinousness

S E R M.
XIII.


SERMON. noufulness of their past Sins terrifies them
 XIII. beyond measure; the Difficulties before
 them, in the little time they have left, appear unsurmountable; and their security, is on a sudden turned into a peevish and disconsolate Despair. They were presumptuous, and negligent to conquer those Difficulties, which at first hindred their entring into the paths of Virtue, like a small rivulet that obstructed their passage; and now the obstacle is swelled into an overflowing stream, *like Jordan in the time of Harvest*. This comparison is very elegantly set forth by the prophet *Jeremy*, ch. xii. 5; *If thou hast run with footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?*

IT is here very necessary to take notice, as I observed at the Beginning, that what is spoken upon This Subject, is not at all applicable to the Frailties and Infirmities of such as sincerely desire to obey God's Commandments; much less does it in any wise concern those pious persons, who

who are very apt to accuse themselves in S E R M.
general, without being conscious of any XIII.
particular Wickedness; and torment them-
selves with the fear of evil and perhaps
blasphemous Thoughts, and the like,
which they heartily detest and abhor. But
all that has been now said, belongs only
to Those, who live wilfully and presump-
tuously in the known Breach of God's ex-
press Commands. And to Sinners of *This*
kind, deferring to Amend, I may add,

IV. *Fourthly* and *Lastly*; BESIDES the
before-mentioned *natural* ill consequences
of delaying Repentance, what *Security*
have they, that if they *do* repent upon a
Death-bed, *God* will then accept them?
Is it fit that sinful and disobedient Crea-
tures, obnoxious to the wrath of God, and
every way unworthy of his Mercy, should
despise all his gracious offers of forgive-
ness, and declare they will not be recon-
ciled to him, till they have enjoyed the
vile pleasures of Sin and Debauchery, as
long as they please? Is it not an Instance
of his Goodness and Compassion, and the
purchase of no less a price than the Blood
of Christ; that the benefit of Repentance
is

SER M. is at all allowed them, after great, wilful, and presumptuous Crimes? Shall men then, instead of thankfully accepting this inestimable mercy, trample upon it and despise it by continuing obstinately in Sin; and heap up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? Would any Earthly Governour bear with those who should tell him, they would rebel against him as long as they pleased, and then intended to sue to him for Pardon afterward? Excellent are the words of the Son of Sirach to this purpose, Ecclus. v. 4; *Say not, I have sinned, and what harm has happened unto me? for though the Lord is long-suffering, he will in no wise let thee go; Concerning propitiation, be not without fear, to add Sin unto Sin; And say not, his mercy is great, he will be pacified for the multitude of Sins; For mercy and wrath come from him, and his indignation resteth upon Sinners; Make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from day to day; for suddenly shall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security thou shalt be destroyed, and perish in the day of vengeance.*

'Tis

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'Tis not without particular reason so distinctly recorded in Scripture, how David, for the Act of two presumptuous Sins, was driven out from his Kingdom, and afflicted with great and almost continual calamities the remaining part of his Life: And yet He was a person eminent for great and illustrious Virtues, and his Repentance for those particular Sins was early and very exemplary. Where then shall those appear, who live in the continued habitual practice of great and crying Sins, and think to expiate all the Wickedness of a whole Life, by the careless formalities of a late Repentance? *If judgment thus begins at the House of God, and the righteous scarcely be saved; where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* There are indeed instances in Scripture of great Sinners, whose Conversion has been as remarkable as their Sins were great and many: But there is no Instance of any that ever wilfully and designedly (after their Knowledge of the Truth) delayed their Repentance, and yet perfected it and were accepted afterwards. On the contrary, the Scripture rather expresses an exceeding great

S E R M.

XIII.

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great

S E R M.
XIII.

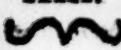
great danger, lest *such* persons should not be accepted at all. The Thief upon the Cross indeed *was* accepted, because it was the *first* opportunity, though in the *last* part of his life, that he had of confessing his Faith in Christ: But from hence no argument or apology can be drawn for those, who *wilfully despise* our Lord and his Holy Commandments, in the *whole course* of their Lives. The Labourers also called into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour, were *therefore* entertained, because they had no opportunity of coming in in the morning; But it would have been no excuse to *Those* who were called in the morning, to have said at *night*, that they were sorry for having been idle *all the day*. Concerning *such* persons the Scripture threatens, that *when once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and they begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; St Luk. xiii. 25.* And God, in the person of Wisdom, forewarns them, *Prov. i. 24; Because I have called, and*

ye

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ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, SERM.
and no man regarded; But ye have set at XIII.
nought all my counsel, and would none of
my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh;
When your fear cometh as desolation, and
your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;
when distress and anguish cometh upon you:
Then shall they call upon me, but I will
not answer; they shall seek me early, but
they shall not find me. And our Saviour
represents their case under the Parable of
five foolish Virgins, who neglecting to trim
their lamps till the noise of the bride-
groom's coming, were excluded, as un-
prepared for the wedding. And seems to
insinuate in the manner of his weeping
over Jerusalem, St Luk. xix. 42, that the
time may come, when *the things that be-*
long to men's peace, shall be hid from their
eyes: Which if ever it be verified in single
persons, it must needs be upon such as
we are now describing. And St Paul ap-
plies to them the evil state of the Jews
in the wilderness, who having often pro-
voked God, and long refused to obey him
and enter into the promised land; at last,

SERM. when they would have entred, he suffered them not, but swore unto them in
 XIII.  his wrath, that they should not enter enter into his rest; Heb. iii. 11. And the Apostle compares presumptuous Sinners to Esau, Heb. xii. 16; Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right; For ye know how afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears. The meaning of these severe Texts is not, that effectual Repentance and Amendment shall ever be rejected; No, God forbid. But have they therefore no meaning at all? Do they not at least express thus much? For Esau's Repentance, was not a Repentance to Amendment: But the meaning is, that men may by a Habit of Wickedness and Debauchery, bring themselves they know not how soon into such circumstances, that it shall be morally impossible, that is, exceeding difficult to renew them again unto such a Repentance, as shall be accepted for true and effectual.

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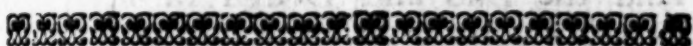
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THE Application of what has been said, S E R M.
is evident. *Let us seek the Lord early, XIII.*
while he may be found; let us call upon
him while he is near: before our feet stum-
ble upon the dark mountains, and we be
overtaken with the shadow of Death, when
That Night cometh wherein no man can
work. Let us watch continually; because
we know neither the day nor the hour,
wherein the Son of man cometh. I con-
clude with the words of the wise Author
of the Book of Eccclus. ch. xxi. ver. 2;
Flee from Sin, as from the face of a Ser-
pent; For the teeth thereof, are as the
teeth of a Lion, slaying the Souls of Men.
And ch. xviii. ver. 20; Before judgment
examine thyself, and in the day of visita-
tion thou shalt find mercy; Humble thyself
before thou be sick, and in the time of Sins
shew Repentance; Let nothing binder thee
to pay thy vows in due time, and defer
not till Death to be justified.



SERMON XIV.

That true Christians are free from
all Habits of Sin.



I JOH. iii. 9.

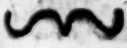
*Whoſoever is born of God, doth not com-
mit Sin; for his Seed remaineth in him;
and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born
of God.*



THE Nature of God, is per-
fect *Goodneſs*, and complete
and absolute *Happineſs*. These
two divine Perfections, are
mutually founded in each o-
ther; and are joyned together by an eter-
nal, neceſſary, and inſeparable connexion.
Every degree of *Goodneſs*, as it is an ap-
proach

SERM.
XIV.

S E R M. proach to the Nature and Likeness of God;
 XIV. so it is partaking in some proportion of
 that Blessed Disposition, which in an infinitely Good Being is infinite *Felicity*:
 And every deviation from the Rules of everlasting Righteousness and Goodness; is a Departure from God, and a wilful forsaking of our own Happiness. The Foundation therefore of Religion, is the Knowledge of God; The Practice of it, is the Imitation of his Perfections. And the End and Design of it, is the bringing us to a participation of his Glory. This capacity of knowing God, and of imitating his divine Excellencies; is the principal thing that distinguishes *Men*, from the inferiour Orders of Creatures: And according to the several degrees we attain of this Knowledge; the greater are our Possibilities of raising ourselves to a higher measure of Happiness, and the stricter our Obligations to attend the Duties of a holier and more perfect Religion. The Gospel of Christ, has furnished us with clearer and truer Notions of the Nature and Attributes of God; with juster Apprehensions of the Greatness of his

his Power, the Wisdom of his Providence, S E R M.
the Severity of his Justice, the Tender- XIV.
ness of his Mercy, and his wonderful Love 
and Condescension towards Mankind; than
the unassisted light of natural Reason a-
lone could ever discover, or than could
be made out by all the additional helps
and improvements of Philosophy; And
proportionably greater are the Obligations
it has laid upon us, to imitate the Holi-
ness of *his Nature*, who is of *Purer Eyes*
than to behold iniquity; to be infinitely
fearful of offending *his justice*, whose
wrath is Now most expressly revealed
from Heaven, against all Ungodliness and
Unrighteousness of men; and to be diligent
in all things, to approve ourselves worthy
of that mercy and loving-kindness of God,
which is made manifest in the Gospel;
walking worthy of God, as St Paul ex-
presses it, who has called us unto his King-
dom and Glory. This, as it is every where
insisted upon in the *New Testament*; so in
no part of it is it more strongly inculca-
ted, more frequently and more emphati-
cally urged, that in this *first Epistle of St*
John. The whole Design whereof, is to
remind

S E R M. remind us, that as *God himself is Light*,
 XIV. that is, perfect and unmixt Holiness; so
 no man, who *walketh in darkness*, who
 liveth in wickedness and impurity, can
have Fellowship with Him: that there is
 no such thing as *knowing God*, no such
 thing as having any pretence to his Fa-
 vour; any other way, than by *keeping his*
Commandments: that whoever *saith*, he
abideth in Him, must *himself also so walk*,
even as He walked: that since *the Father*
has bestowed such Love upon us, that we
should be called the Sons of God; it be-
 hoves every man that has this hope in him,
 to verify That high Title, by *purifying*
himself even as he is pure: That all other
 methods of appearing to be religious, be-
 sides that One real and substantial Rule
 of *doing righteousness* in imitation of God,
 are mere *Deceits*; That there is *One only*
 manifest and infallible mark, to distin-
 guish between *the children of God*, and
the children of the Devil; *Whosoever doth*
not Righteousness, is not of God, neither he
 that loveth not his Brother: Lastly, that
Whosoever is born of God, doth not com-
 mit Sin; for his seed remaineth in him,
 and

from all Habits of Sin.

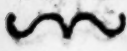
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and he cannot Sin, because he is born of God. S E R M.
XIV.

IN Discourſing upon which words, I ſhall firſt endeavour to explain diſtinctly the ſeveral Phraſes made uſe of in the Text: What is meant, by *being born of God*: In what Senſe it is ſaid, that whoſoever is ſo born of God, *doth not commit Sin*: What is to be underſtood by the Reaſon alledged, *For his Seed remaineth in him*: And how it is affirmed that ſuch a one *cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of God*.

Secondly; I SHALL conſider briefly the general Doctrin, intended to be laid down by the Apoſtle in the Words. And

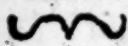
I. *Firſt*; WHAT we are to underſtand by *being Born of God*; *Whoſoever is Born of God*. Now this Phraſe, by an eaſy figure, ſignifies being of ſuch a Divine and Heavenly Diſpoſition, of ſuch a virtuous Frame and Temper of Mind, as denominates a man a worthy and good Chriſtian, a true and ſincere member of Chriſt, a Subject of the Kingdom of God on earth; and qualifies him to be a Partaker of his Kingdom in Heaven. And the *reaſon* of the Expreſſion, is clear and obvious.

SERM. ous. For as in the ordinary course and
 XIV. derivation of things *Natural*, the Off-

spring is always of the same Species with
 the *Stock* from whence it proceeds; and
 the *Effect* must in proportion be answer-
 able, to the Nature and Operations of the
Cause that produced it; as the *Stream*
 must always be of the same kind, and re-
 tain the same good or ill Qualities, with
 the *Fountain* from which it flows; and
 the *Branches* cannot be of another nature,
 than the *Root* from whence they derive
 their Original: So in things *Moral*, in
 things *Figurative*, in things *Spiritual* and
 of an *Abstract* nature; there can *seldom*
 be any description given of them, so live-
 ly and significantly expressive of their
 true nature and properties, as by repre-
 senting them under the Similitude of the
 ordinary course of Causes and Effects, and
 according to the Proportions of things of
 a natural Derivation. The ingrafted
 Branches, as well as the natural, receive
 their nourishment from the root they are
 united to; and partake of its Life and
 Fruitfulness. Accordingly, Our spiritual
 communication with Christ our Head, and

our Dependence upon him as such; the S E R M. necessity of our being transformed, into XIV. the likeness of his nature; and of our being in *our* measure and proportion, what he was in *his* complete Possession of divine Perfections; this our Lord *himself* represents to us by comparing himself to a *Vine*; (St *Joh.* xv. 1;) of which Himself is the Root, and his Disciples the Branches. Nor could the largest and most particular description in *Any* words, give us a clearer Notion *how* the Christian Life consists in the imitation and practice of those excellent Virtues, which are in their proportion Transcripts of the *Divine* Perfections; than we are at once furnished with, by such a Comparison. *Children by Adoption*, are *presumed*, to conform themselves to the manners, to imitate the Customs, to obey the Rules, of the Family they are received into; and, as far as possible, to answer in every respect the relation of natural Children. The Scripture styles those the children of *Abraham*, not only who were derived from him by lineal descent according to the *Flesh*; but Those also even *much more*, more frequently

SERM.

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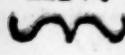


quently and more emphatically; who, though Strangers by Birth, yet so imitated his Faith, and copied after his exemplary Obedience; as if they had had the advantage of his religious Education, and had been brought up in the Family and under the immediate Care of that great Father of the Faithful.

To be *Born of God* therefore, signifies, by the *like* figurative expression, being of such a *disposition*, of such a *temper*, of such *acquired Qualifications* of Mind, by the habitual practice of Religion; as if we had been originally and by Nature constituted, of a more excellent and divine Frame; that, in like manner as Angels, those higher and more perfect Spirits, those Servants of God that do his pleasure, are constantly and without reluctance obeying his Will in Heaven; so We may with cheerfulness be perpetually performing, his Commandments on Earth. Which ready and delightful Obedience cannot be better described, than by representing it under the Similitude of a natural and original Perfection, even as the immediate Effect and Product of the most Excellent
and

and Perfect Cause. By *escaping the cor-* SERM.
XIV.
ruptions that are in the world through
Lust; we are made partakers, saith St Pe-
ter, of the Divine Nature; 2 Pet. i. 4:
We are exalted beyond our proper and o-
riginal capacities, to the likeness of God,
and to a participation of his divine Excel-
lencies. Our Saviour himself illustrates
his description of a truly good man, by
the *like* comparison, St Job. iii. 6; *That*
which is born of the Flesh, is Flesh; but
that which is born of the Spirit, is Spi-
rit. His meaning is: by our *natural*
Birth we are entitled only to the possible
Acquirements of this frail and mortal
Life; but by being *renewed in the Spirit*
of our Mind, through the Power and Ef-
ficacy of true Religion, we are prepared
for a happy Immortality; for such an
Immortality, as if even originally we had
been created of a higher and more per-
fectly spiritual Nature; of *such* a nature,
as we shall be endued with at the *resur-*
rection, when we shall be (as our Lord
is pleased to express himself) *equal unto*
the Angels. The same Expression St Paul
makes use of, Gal. iv. 29: *As Then he that*
was

SERM. *was born after the Flesh, persecuted him*

XIV. *that was born after the Spirit, even so*
 *it is now. By One born after the Flesh,*

he means a worldly and sensual person, one that has wholly given himself up, to gratify his bodily Appetites, and pursue the sinful enjoyments of the *present* Life, without making any improvement of his Mind by Virtuous Practice, in order to prepare himself for a better State *hereafter*. On the contrary, a religious and good man, who subdues the irregular Appetites of Sense, and keeps them in Subjection to the Laws of Reason, and of a holy and spiritual Religion beyond what could be expected from the mere Dictates of Nature, such a One the Apostle describes by being *born after the Spirit*. The intention of *Both* these Phrases is, to signify, that true Religion makes so great an improvement of our Nature, so great a change in the Life and Disposition of a Man who has formerly been wicked; that it is not improperly expressed, comparatively speaking, by his being as it were *Born* into a new State. Civility and Government, Learning and good Manners,
 transform

transform the nature of man from savage S E R M.
to humane ; and true Religion exalts it XIV.
still higher, from humane even to di-
vine.

As therefore *Children by Nature* are apt to resemble their Parents, and to *conform* themselves to the Manners and Customs of the Family wherein they receive their Education ; So they who *through grace*, they who being *born of the Spirit*, are transformed by the *renewing of their mind*, Rom. xii. 2 ; and, who, by Obedience and Imitation of God, are *changed* (as the Apostle expresses it) *into the same Image*, 2 Cor. iii. 18 ; are aptly called his *Sons* and his *Children* ; having attained that excellent privilege by the improvements of Religion, which Angels are endued with by the prerogative of their Creation. Angels, upon account of the original Excellency of their created Nature, are frequently in Scripture stiled *the Sons of God* ; and of good Christians, upon account of their reconciliation and return to the favour of God, it is affirmed, that *as many as received our Lord, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them*

S E R M. *that believe on his Name, (St Joh. i. 12;)*

XIV. *that we are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, (Gal. iii. 26;) that the Father has bestowed such love upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God, (1 Joh. iii. 1.) And the reason of this manner of speaking, is expressly added by St Paul, Rom. viii. 14; For, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, as many as give themselves up to his guidance, and pay him a willing and cheerful Obedience, serving and imitating him as dutiful children, that is, being born of the Spirit, they are the Sons of God.*

ON the other side, vicious and corrupt men, are by a like Expression stiled in Scripture, *the children of this World*, St Luk. xvi. 8; and very wicked and malicious persons, Sons of *Belial*, Sons of *Violence*, Sons of *Wickedness*, and Children of *the Devil*: Thus our Saviour, reproving the *Pharisees* for their extreme Malice and Wickedness, describes it in the following manner; *Ye do*, saith he, *that which ye have seen with your Father; ye do the deeds of your Father; ye*

I

are

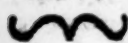
are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts S E R M.
of your Father ye will do; St Joh. viii. XIV.
38, 41, 44.

AND in general, the two opposite sorts of men, good and bad, are compared together under these characters, 1 *Job. iii. 10*, in the words immediately following the Text; and a distinguishing mark given, by which we may certainly discern them one from another: *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil; Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God; neither he that loveth not his Brother.*

FROM this explication of the Phrase, *being Born of God*, 'tis easy to perceive what the Apostle St Paul understands by the word *Adoption*; when he tells us that Christ came into the World *to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons*, Gal. iv. 5; and that *we have not received the Spirit of bondage again to Fear, but the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; Rom. viii. 15. It appears sufficiently from what has been said; that This *Adoption*, is not a particular or single Grace, a particular

S E R M.

XIV.



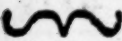
particular gracious Act of God, as has sometimes been discoursed in a manner hardly intelligible; but it signifies plainly the very same thing in general, as being *children of God* or *born of him*: denoting on God's part that gracious Favour and Mercy of the Gospel, whereby he pities the infirmities of those who sincerely endeavour to obey his commandments; and treats us, not as *Servants*, with the strictness and severity of a Master; but, as *children*, with the Love and tender Affection of a Father; and on our part, an Obligation to make suitable returns for so excellent a privilege, by a willing and chearful Subjection to him in all things, as dutiful Children.

THE means by which we attain to, and are made partakers of this high privilege, are *Faith* and *Obedience*: Such a *Faith*, as enables us to conquer all the sinful Temptations of the World; (1 Job. v. 1, 4.) *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*: And whatsoever is born of God, *overcometh the World*; For This is the victory that *overcometh the World, even our Faith*. And such an Obedience,

bedience, as evidences itself by the practice S B R M.
of universal Righteousness, in Imitation XIV.
of the Holiness of God himself; ch. ii.

v. 29; *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness, is born of him.* The principal Instance of which universal Righteousness, that the Scripture most earnestly and constantly insists upon *in particular*, and joins it together with the Love of God; is mutual Love, Charity, Goodness, towards our Brethren, and Forgiveness of injuries: *Beloved, let us love one another, (1 Joh. iv. 7;) for Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.* And our Saviour himself recommends doing Good even to our very enemies, from the same Arguments; *St Matt. v. 45; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

THIS is that divine and heavenly Temper which the Apostle in the Text describes by being *Born of God*. And because in the greater part of Christians, es-

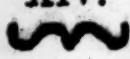
S E R M. pecially in those who were Converts from
 XIV.  Heathenism, this excellent Disposition was
 no less than a *Total Change* from an en-
 tirely contrary State; from being dead in
trespasses and Sins, to a *Life* of righteous-
 ness and true Holiness; therefore in Scrip-
 ture it is frequently stiled *Regeneration* or
the new Birth: *Except a man be born a-*
gain, saith our Saviour, he cannot see the
Kingdom of God, St Joh. iii. 3; and St
Paul, Tit. iii. 5; According to his mercy
he has saved us, by the washing of Regene-
ration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost:
 and St Pet. (1 ep. ch. i. ver. 3;) *Blessed*
be God, who has begotten us again unto a
lively hope by the resurrection of Christ
from the dead. Concerning which *Rege-*
neration, because many Doctrines very dif-
 ficult to be understood, have sometimes
 been taught; 'tis to be observed, that in
 like manner as a man by his natural Birth
 is not born with the Reason and Perfec-
 tions of a man, but only with the Facul-
 ties and Possibilities of attaining those
 Perfections; so Regeneration or the Spi-
 ritual Birth, is not a thing worked upon a
 Man necessarily and in a Moment; but being
 begun

begun in Baptism, is to be verified and made good by the improvement and practice of all Christian virtues during the whole course of our Lives; and is lost and destroyed by any habitual Wickedness, as the natural Life of the Body is by Diseases and Death.

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Lastly, BECAUSE that pious Disposition, which the Apostle expresses by *being Born of God*, is what every Christian is indispensably *obliged* to arrive to; and what by his very Profession he is *supposed* to have already in some measure attained; and what the generality of Christians in the primitive and purest times actually *did* possess; therefore a man's being *born of God*, signifies in Scripture Phrase, the same as being a *true and sincere Christian*; and *Whosoever is born of God*, is as much as if the Apostle had said, *Whosoever pretends to be a good Christian*.

2dly; WE are to consider in what Sense it is said, that whosoever has a just claim to this Character, *doth not commit Sin*. And here by *not committing Sin*, 'tis evident the Apostle does not mean, in the strict and absolute Sense, that any man

S E R M. can be perfectly and entirely finless. No;
 XIV.  in this Sense, *there is none Good, but One, that is God.* For he chargeth even his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his sight; How much less, Man that is a worm; and the Son of Man which is a Worm. But the meaning is, that a good Christian never allows himself in the *Habit*, of any known Sin; nor suffers himself to fall into the single *Acts*, of any of those great and enormous Crimes, which are expressly said to exclude men from the Kingdom of Heaven. The Frailties and Infirmities of good men, which often raise groundless Fears and Scruples in the Breasts of melancholy and pious Persons; are not the things, which, in the Scripture-Sense of the word, denominate men *Sinners*. These are allowed for in the very original Constitution of the Gospel-Covenant, and are hardly at all in the *New Testament* called by the Name of Sins; good men being said, notwithstanding these, to be *righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* But Sin, in the *New Testament*, signifies most commonly,
 either

either the *Habit* of Vice; or at least, SERM.
XIV.
(which are equivalent to it in guilt,) the Acts of some great and plain Crimes. As when our Saviour tells us, he will bid to depart from him all the workers of Iniquity, St Luk. xiii. 27: and that *whosoever committeth Sin, is the Servant of Sin*; St Joh. viii. 34: These plainly denote the general Custom or *Habit*. And so likewise do those declarations of the Apostles; that the *Wages of Sin is Death*, Rom. vi, 23; and that *he that committeth Sin, is of the Devil*; 1 Joh. iii. 8.

WE use the word vulgarly in a different Signification, and so also does the Scripture itself, when it says that *All men are Sinners, and none righteous*. The meaning of which and the like expressions, in some places, is, to signify the great Corruption of the Generality of men at some particular Time or Place: Thus when we read, Gen. vi. 5: *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the Earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*; 'Tis plain This was not intended for a Character of all Mankind at all times and in all places,

S E R M. places, but of the Generality of those
 XIV. who lived at the Time of the Flood. In
 ~~~~~ other places, the like Phrases express the  
 great Corruption, that is spread among  
 Men of *all* Professions; Thus when St  
*Paul* affirms that *the Scripture has con-*  
*cluded all under Sin*, Gal. iii. 22; and that  
*all have sinned, and come short of the Glory*  
*of God*, Rom. iii. 23; his Intention in  
 These passages, is not to give a character  
 of every individual Person in particular,  
 but to declare in general concerning the  
 Nation of the *Jews* as well as concerning  
 the *Gentiles*, (as he in express words ex-  
 plains himself, ver. 9,) that *both Jews and*  
*Gentiles are all under Sin*; and that con-  
 sequently Both of them are equally obliged  
 to believe in Christ, and have recourse to  
 the mercy of the Gospel for Salvation.  
 Lastly, in *Other* places, the like manner  
 of expression signifies, that no man is free  
 from failings and imperfections, from in-  
 firmities, surprizes, and inadvertencies: In  
 This Sense it is, that St *James* confesses,  
 that *in many things we offend all*, St James  
 iii. 2; and that *Job* declares of himself,  
*If I justify myself, my own mouth shall*  
*condemn*

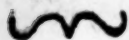
condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall  
also prove me perverse; Job ix. 20. And  
when St John declares, that if we say we  
have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, 1 Joh. i.  
8; 'tis evident he cannot mean this of  
Sins properly so called in the Gospel-  
Sense, but only of unavoidable infirmities;  
because he adds, almost in the very next  
words, *These things I write unto you that  
ye sin not.*

BUT now, to commit Sin, in the Scrip-  
ture-Sense, signifies to be knowingly and  
deliberately a Worker of Unrighteousness;  
to fall into the *habitual* practice of any  
Vice whatever, or into the *Acts* of any  
of the greater and more enormous crimes;  
of *such* Crimes as are evidently contrary to  
the great and plain design of the Com-  
mandments, and are included by St Paul  
in the Catalogue of Sins which expressly  
exclude men from the Kingdom of Hea-  
ven. And concerning These the Apostle  
clearly and without reserve declares, that  
*Whosoever is born of God, Whosoever is  
a true and sincere Christian, doth not at  
all commit Sin.*

3dly;

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3dly; HERE is the Reason given, why no man, who is born of God, doth, in the Sense now explained, commit Sin. For his Seed remaineth in him. What is meant by the Seed here mentioned, our Saviour himself has explained to us, St Luke viii. 5, 11; *A Sower went out to sow his seed; and some fell by the ways side, and some upon a rock, and some among thorns, and some on good ground: And the Seed, saith he, is the Word of God; the Doctrine and Precepts of the Gospel, the Principles of true Religion; which with the assistance of the Spirit of God always accompanying them, are the Ground and Foundation, the Root and Spring of all virtuous and holy Actions; the Principle of a new and heavenly Life: God, of his own will, saith St James, begat us with the word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures; St Jam. i. 18: and We are born again, saith St Peter, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever; 1 Pet. i. 23. This word of God, these Principles of true Religion, the Doctrine and Instruction of the Gospel, is by some received*

received so carelessly and with so little S E R M.  
attention, that it is presently forgotten and XIV.  
leaves no impression upon their Minds; 

as Corn sown upon the beaten road, is lost  
without ever entring into the earth at all.

By others it is entertained with pleasure  
at first; but either upon meeting with Dif-  
ficulties it is soon deserted, or by worldly  
business and pleasures over-whelmed; As  
Corn sown upon a rock, quickly withers  
for want of depth; and that which springs  
up among weeds, is commonly choaked  
and overgrown by them. But then lastly

by others it is received in such a manner,  
as Seed is by good ground; *With an honest  
and good heart, having heard the word,  
they keep it, faith our Saviour, and bring  
forth fruit with patience; St Luk. viii. 15.*

The Phrase, they *Keep or Retain* it, is ex-  
actly of the same import with that in the  
Text, that *His Seed Remaineth in him.*

*Whosoever is born of God, whosoever is a  
true and worthy Christian, in him This  
word of God, this Principle of Life, Re-  
maineth; The Motives and Arguments of  
Religion are throughly embraced by him  
and*



S E R M. and fixt in him, and have made a deep  
 XIV. and lasting impression upon his mind.

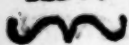
~ The Doctrine of the Gospel is entertained by him; not so slightly and superficially, as either to be soon forgotten by carelessness and neglect, or so as to be deserted upon the approach of any troubles and difficulties, or so as to be over-ruled by any Temptations of Pleasure and Profit; but he believes it heartily, and retains it firmly, and governs himself by it constantly; and it becomes in him an active and ruling Principle; the first spring, and the continual guide and director of all the Actions of his Life. This is what the Scripture, in pursuance of the fore-mentioned Similitude, stiles *being fruitful*, bringing forth the *Fruits of the Spirit*, and *bringing forth much fruit*; Col. i. 10, and St *Joh.* xv. 5. Such a man's *Faith* in God remains firm, and *overcometh the World*; his *Hope* continues stedfast, and, as a sure Anchor, preserves him unmoved in all the changes and disorders of the World; His *Charity* is universal in imitation of God, whose Goodness extends  
 itself

itself over all his Works, and whose Children we are if we obey his Commandments. SERM.  
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4thly; IT remains to be enquired in the *Fourth* and *Last* place, how and in what Sense it is affirmed by the Apostle, that such a Person Cannot Sin, because he is born of God. The Gnosticks, that is men of perfect Knowledge, as they stiled themselves; certain *Ancient* Deceivers, against whom in particular St *John* argues in this whole Epistle; pretended that they were so perfect, and had so entire a Knowledge of God, and were so absolutely in his Favour; that they could not by any means fall under his displeasure: And some in *modern* times have from this, and other the like passages in Scripture, concluded that there is an absolute Impossibility of good mens falling away into a State of Sin, and consequently under the divine displeasure. The *ancient* opinion of the Gnosticks, who thought they could not lose the favour of God, whatever ill practices they were guilty of; was so plainly impious and destructive of Religion, that St *John* wrote this Epistle on purpose

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purpose to prove, that it was infinitely absurd for them to pretend to *know* God, and hope to continue in his Favour, while they knowingly and presumptuously disobeyed his Laws; and therefore he so frequently repeats it, and (alluding to their pretences of a most perfect *Knowledge* of God, he) inculcates it again and again, that *hereby only we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*; and that *whosoever saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.* The later Opinion, concerning the Impossibility of good mens falling into a State of Sin; though it cannot indeed be directly charged with any such Impiety as the former; yet is it a Doctrine so contrary to Scripture and Experience, so unreasonable in itself, and of so bad consequence in making men negligent and secure and unattentive to the continual warnings given us in Scripture to watch perpetually, and, when we are most confident of standing, to *take heed, lest we fall*; that it must needs be of service to Religion, to show how very weak and ill-grounded the Notion is.

W H E N

WHEN therefore the Apostle tells us, *that whosoever is born of God, cannot sin*; S E R M. XIV.  
in order to understand the true meaning of the expression, 'tis to be observed, that the word *Cannot*, in Scripture, as well as in common Use, signifies most frequently, not any absolute and natural Impossibility; but what, morally speaking, is not *likely* to come to pass; what cannot *probably*, what cannot *without great difficulty*, what cannot *reasonably* or *fitly* be done; what *ought not* to be done; what cannot be done *without forfeiting a man's character*, and *ceasing to be what he was*. It Cannot be, saith our Saviour; that is, 'tis very unlikely; *that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem*; St Luk. xiii. 33. *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit*, saith St Paul, *and the Spirit against the Flesh*; so that ye cannot, his Meaning is, ye cannot without great difficulty, *do the things that ye would*; Gal. v. 17. Men that Cannot cease from Sin, saith St Peter, 2 Pet. ii. 14; he means, whose confirmed evil Habits and long Customs of sinning are exceeding hard to be broken off. *We Cannot do this thing*, said the Sons of Jacob,  
VOL. IX. Z Gen.



SERM. Gen. xxxiv. 14; i. e. 'tis not fit, 'tis not  
 XIV. reasonable, 'tis not honourable for us; to  
 give our daughter to one that is uncircum-  
 cised. Again: *I Cannot do any thing till  
 thou be come thither*, said God himself to  
*Lot* fleeing towards *Zoar*, Gen. xix. 22;  
 and our Saviour *Could do no mighty works*,  
 saith *St Mark*, in his own Country, *because  
 of their Unbelief*, *St Mar.* vi. 5: 'Tis ma-  
 nifest these expressions were never intend-  
 ed to signify *Want of Power*; but that it  
 was not fit, that it was not reasonable nor  
 agreeable to the designs and methods of  
 Providence, that these things should be  
 done in those particular Places and Cir-  
 cumstances.

AND thus likewise in the words of the  
 Text; when the Apostle affirms that *Who-  
 soever is born of God, Cannot Sin*; Most  
 evidently his meaning is not, that there is  
 any *Impossibility* of his Sinning; but that  
 he cannot Sin, without ceasing to be what  
 he was, without forfeiting his Character  
 of being *born of God*: Even as a *just* man,  
*cannot deceive*; a *pious* man, *cannot blas-  
 pheme*; a *good tree* (as our Saviour him-  
 self expresses it) *cannot bring forth bad  
 fruit.*

fruit. Not that there is any natural Im-<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
possibility of such great Changes happen-<sup>XIV.</sup>  
ing; but that 'tis a Contradiction, so long  
as things continue in their present State,  
and have not changed their whole Deno-  
mination. So far therefore is this ex-  
pression of the Apostle, from affording  
men any ground of vain confidence and  
assurance; that directly on the contrary,  
it is a caution and warning of a very great  
danger. 'Tis impossible for one that is  
born of God, to *commit Sin*, in the Sense  
before explained; Does it therefore fol-  
low, that we may safely be careless and  
secure? No; on the contrary, we ought  
*therefore* to be doubly vigilant lest we  
*commit Sin*; because our committing it,  
will be a demonstration, either that we  
never were at all the children of God, or  
else that we have parted with that Cha-  
racter. 'Tis impossible *that a good tree*  
*should bring forth bad fruit*; Are we thence  
to conclude, that how corrupt soever the  
fruit of such a tree proves, yet it must not  
be accounted bad fruit? No; but on the  
contrary, that the Tree itself is no longer  
good, but is become fit only *to be hewed*  
*down and cast into the Fire*. And that

S E R M. the Apostle *intended* the words to be understood thus by way of Caution, and not as a ground of Confidence; is evident, not only from reason and from numberless other places of Scripture; but more particularly from the parallel place, in the *vth* chapter of this Epistle, ver. 18; where he says, *We know that whosoever is born of God, Sinneth not*; why? because there is any natural Impossibility of his falling into Sin? or because his Crimes, if he commit any, shall not be accounted to him as Sins? No; but because such a one is under an extraordinary Obligation to avoid Sin, and *Keepeth himself*, saith the Apostle, (with great care and diligence,) *and That wicked one touches him not.*

II, *Secondly*; THE several Phrases in the Text being thus explained; The general Doctrine intended to be laid down by the Apostle in the words, appears plain and obvious, and needs neither Enlargement nor Application; namely, that *no true Christian* lives in the practice of any known Sin; but the Principles of his Religion (a true Sense of God and of the obligations of Virtue) remaining firm in him,

him, are both the Spring and the Rule of S E R M.  
all his Actions; and he can no more fall XIV.  
into any habitual wickedness, than a *good*  
*Tree can bring forth bad Fruit.* If he  
does, he forfeits his character; and has no  
longer any Title to that high privilege, of  
being a *Child of God*: unless he recovers  
himself again by a Repentance as exem-  
plary, as his Fall from so excellent a State  
was scandalous. A Shadow does not so  
greatly differ, from the Substance of which  
it seems to be a resemblance; nor a faint  
Picture, from the living Person whom it  
was intended to represent; as a man who  
bears only the Name and Profession of a  
Christian, does from such a one as is in  
Scripture described to be *Born of God*.  
The great End and Intention of Christ's  
Religion; the chief, the whole Use and  
Design of the Gospel; is to oblige us to  
be better and more virtuous, than other  
men who want these assistances, and have  
not the encouragement of such glorious  
expectations. 'Tis to lay stronger obliga-  
tions upon us, to live up to a more excel-  
lent rule, and perfect a more acceptable  
Obedience, in all our several Relations and



342 *That true Christians are free, &c.*

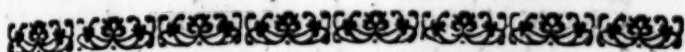
S E R M. Circumstances of Life. That those whom  
 XIV. God has endued with *Power* and *Riches*  
 and *Honour*, may by a more extensive and  
 diffusive Goodness, imitate *His* exercise of  
 Power and Greatness, who is Lord of  
 Lords and King of Kings; That *Inferi-*  
*ours* may (in all just and lawful Cases)  
 obey with Conscience and with a true Sense  
 of Duty; knowing that wise government  
 and good Order, is the Support of the  
 World; The Constitution of God for  
 maintaining Peace and Order amongst  
 Men, and the greatest Blessing of Provi-  
 dence; And lastly, that *All*, in their re-  
 spective Stations, by mutual Love and  
 Assistance, by universal Charity and Good-  
 Will, by true Piety, Righteousness and  
 Holiness, and the Practice of all Christian  
 Virtues; may here furnish their Minds  
 with such habitual Qualifications, as will  
 fit them hereafter to become worthy Sub-  
 jects of the eternal Kingdom of God.

S E R M O N



# SERMON XV.

That Mens True Happiness consists  
in the Favour of GOD.



PSAL. iv. 6.

*There be many that say, Who will shew us  
any good : Lord, lift thou up the Light  
of thy countenance upon us.*



HERE is nothing wherein all mankind so naturally and universally agree, as in desiring and searching after their own Happiness; and yet nothing wherein they differ more, than in their several means of pursuing it. All men naturally enquire, and search after what may make them happy; *There be many*  
Z 4 *that*

SERMON.  
XV.

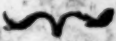
SERM. *that say, Who will shew us any good? But*

XV. *while vicious and debauched persons, Pursuers of forbidden Pleasures and unrighteous Gains, weary themselves in vain, about things wherein is no Profit; the Psalmist determines, that true, solid and lasting Happiness, is to be found only in the Knowledge and in the Favour of God; in the practice of Virtue and true Religion. Lord, lift Thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

FROM the words therefore we may observe these three things;

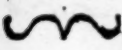
*1<sup>st</sup>*; THAT there is necessarily implanted in the very Nature of Man, a Desire of promoting his own Happiness. *2<sup>dly</sup>*; That wicked and corrupt men seek this Happiness in the sinful Enjoyments of the present Life; and that their chusing so to do, is their great Errour and Folly. *3<sup>dly</sup>*; That righteous and good men, believe their *chief* Happiness, to consist in the Knowledge and in the Favour of God; in the imitation of his Nature, and in the obedience of his Commands; and that their acting according to this belief, is the greatest and truest Wisdom.

*I. First;*

I. *First*; THERE is necessarily im-SERM.  
planted in the very Nature of Man, a XV.  
desire of promoting his own Happiness.   
This is a self-evident Truth, and needs no  
Proof. For however men differ in other  
things, yet in this 'tis manifest they *All*  
agree, that true Happiness is their ulti-  
mate end. Learned and Ignorant, Wise  
men and Foolish, the Righteous and the  
Wicked do all consent in This point; and  
the only difference between them lies, in  
determining *wherein* their true Happiness  
consists, and by *what methods* it may best  
be attained. As many as make a right  
judgment in this matter, and act accor-  
dingly in the whole course of their lives;  
these are Wise and Good, rational and  
virtuous men: They on the contrary, who  
place their Happiness in a wrong Object,  
or pursue it by improper and unrighteous  
means, are ignorant and wicked. Yet  
nevertheless all men equally intend to pur-  
sue their own Happiness; and even They  
who make themselves the most extremely  
miserable by the greatest Follies and most  
destructive Vices, even These are still se-  
duced into it by some false pretence, and  
some



S E R M. some appearance of Happiness: Only this

XV.  their error proceeds from their own Negligence or Wilfulness; they are what our Saviour calls *Fools* and *Blind*; and *That* makes them altogether inexcusable. Daily experience shows, how insatiably ambitious men pursue after Honour; and frequently sacrifice all sense of Virtue, and the satisfaction of a good Conscience, for the attainment of a vain imaginary Greatness: Likewise how unreasonably covetous and oppressive men, suffer perpetual fatigue of Body and uneasiness of Mind, in the unrighteous pursuit of what they hardly ever enjoy. And how absurdly the Voluptuous destroy themselves in following after Pleasure; and, for momentary gratifications of brutal Folly, bring upon themselves frequently the acutest Pains of Body, and the much *more* intolerable Burden of a tormented Mind. On the other side, *dying* men, who look back with an unprejudiced eye on all these short-lived Vanities, and who are now drawing near to that unchangeable determination, which is to fix them in a happy or in a miserable Eternity: How meanly, how contemptibly do

do They always think, of all the sinful, S E R M.  
may even *innocent* enjoyments of this pre- XV.  
sent World? And what a *great*, what a  
*just* concern are they under, in respect of  
their *Future* State? that is, in respect of  
*That* State, wherein Now their *only Hope*  
of Happiness remains? And not with re-  
gard to Eternity only, but even in this  
*present Life itself*, True Religion is so far  
from discouraging men in their *search af-*  
*ter Happiness*, that it forbids not the en-  
joyment of any one temporal Blessing  
which God has created for the use of man,  
but only those disorderly Instances or un-  
reasonable Excesses, by which foolish men  
make both themselves and others misera-  
ble. Thus self-evident it is, that all men  
are necessarily by the very direction of their  
Nature employed in the pursuit after Hap-  
piness; and there is no need to enlarge  
further upon it. There be many that say;  
That is, *All men* naturally inquire, *Who*  
*will shew us any good?*

II. *Secondly*; T H E next thing to be ob-  
served, is, That wicked and corrupt men  
seek this Happiness in the sinful enjoy-  
ments of the present Life; and that their  
choosing

S E R M. choosing so to do, is their great Errour  
 XV. and Folly. That too great a part of men,  
 are, *like the Beasts that perish*, wholly intent upon the sensual Enjoyments of this present Life; without Any regard to the Dictates of Reason, or the Obligations of Religion; and that they have very little and slight concern for what is to come *hereafter*; is too evident to be denied: But then 'tis also no less evident, to any one who considers the true nature and final issue of things, that such persons act to the highest degree irrationally and unwisely; and that the things, by the enjoyment of which they propose to be happy, are by no means Sufficient to That End. The Enjoyments of this present world are ranked by St *John* under these three heads, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*; 1 Joh. ii. 16; that is, Pleasure, Riches, and Honour. These are (as the Apostle there styles them) *all that is in the world*, that is, all the Happiness that this present world can afford. But now *every one of these in particular*, (even where the enjoyment of them is *innocent*, much more when the  
 sting

sting of *Sin* is annexed,) has a great S E R M.  
mixture of Evil attending it, has at best XV.  
much emptiness and imperfection in it, has  
much unsatisfactoriness and disappointment going along with it; and *all of them taken together*, are very far from being able to make a man truly happy, because they still want the two principal and most necessary Qualifications of Happiness, *viz. Perfection of Degree, and Continuance in Duration*: They are not at best compleat enough to Satisfy the Mind of Man; and, if they were, yet they cannot continue long enough to maintain and preserve its Happiness. For if all other things be supposed to happen to the best advantage, yet the World itself comes to an end at the Conclusion of a man's own Life, and then we are sure all its enjoyments perish. *First*; Every one *in particular*, of the Enjoyments of this present Life, has a great deal of Evil mixt with it, has much unsatisfactoriness and disappointment attending it. To instance in *Pleasure*, That great Idol of mankind; for the sake of which, all other things are desired; and which alone has the greatest pretence to  
make



S E R M. make men happy ; This *itself*, is of all  
 XV. other things the *most* imperfect and dis-  
 appointing, and has the *most Evil* mixt  
 with it and consequent upon it. By *Plea-  
 sure*, I would here be understood to mean,  
*Sensual pleasure* ; that is, such as vicious  
 and debauched persons call by that Name ;  
 Sensual pleasure, or Voluptuousness, as 'tis  
 opposed to the rational and temperate en-  
 joyments of a virtuous man and a good  
 Christian. For otherwise, Pleasure in ge-  
 neral as 'tis the Enjoyment of Good, and  
 the Desire of Pleasure as it signifies the  
 Love of ourselves and the seeking our own  
 Happiness, is one of the first and most natu-  
 ral Principles implanted in Mankind, which  
 neither ought nor can be laid aside by  
 any man : And this very Principle *itself*  
 affords an undeniable argument, why men  
 ought willingly to part with the short and  
 unreasonable pleasures of *Sin*, for the un-  
 changeable and eternal Happiness of *Hea-  
 ven*. When therefore we affirm that Plea-  
 sure is infinitely insufficient to make a-  
 ny person truly happy, we are always to  
 understand *such* Sensual pleasure, as vi-  
 cious and debauched men fix their thoughts  
 upon,

upon, in opposition to the wise and rational S E R M.  
Pleasures of Temperance and Religion. Now, XV.  
that Pleasure, in *this* sense, is very far from  
making men happy, is evident both from  
Experience and from the Reason of things.  
For no men plainly are so extremely mi-  
serable, as those who *thus* pretend to be  
the greatest Voluptuaries. They toil and  
labour for that which is not, and are fre-  
quently disappointed of what they most  
desire, and undergo perpetual uneasiness  
both of Body and Mind, and endure much  
Labour for momentary Pleasures; for  
Pleasures which themselves are nothing  
but Disappointment at the best, far short  
of what their vain imaginations repre-  
sented, and are allayed with innumerable  
mixtures of Pain and Trouble, and end  
in Sorrow and Delusion, and leave behind  
them nothing but Remorse and Repen-  
tance; And how can such persons as these  
esteem themselves happy? In like man-  
ner, *Riches*, the next instance wherein  
corrupt Minds usually place their Happi-  
ness; are no less insufficient to that end,  
than Sensual Pleasure. In the hands of  
generous and worthy men, of charitable  
and

SERM. and pious Christians, they *may* indeed be.

XV. come instruments of great Benefit, occasions of much advantage to Religion, and means of true Happiness. But to make a vicious man happy, a man whose Happiness is not founded in God and Religion, they are altogether ineffectual. For, besides the uncertainty of the things themselves, that *Riches often make themselves wings and fly away; they are moreover* (as Solomon wisely observes) *often kept by the owners thereof to their hurt*; Eccles. v. 13; to serve the Ends of Oppression, Unrighteousness, and Debauchery.

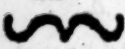
*Lastly*; HONOUR, that great Hope and Aim of the Ambitious, is neither a *real* Good, nor can it be called our *own*. The Virtues for which a worthy man is honoured, are far more valuable than the Honour which the world pays to his worth; and these virtues can alone remain with him, when perhaps that Honour and Esteem may be turned into Reproach. For in this erroneous world, men are frequently honoured for what is truly dishonourable, and sometimes they are calumniated for that which really deserves

serves the highest Praises. Now 'tis evident one man cannot be made truly happy or unhappy, by another's false and mistaken opinion: For this were to make the Happiness of the best and wisest men, depend upon the weak and false imaginations of the most ignorant and foolish. The Honour therefore and Applause of a deceitful world, cannot really make a man happy, nor the want of it be the cause of a wise man's misery.

ADD to all this, that besides the peculiar insufficiency of every one of these things of Pleasure, Riches and Honour, each considered in *themselves*; they are moreover each of them destroyed, as to their Power of making men happy, by the Want of Either or Both of the *other*. Nay, supposing a man to enjoy every one and *All* of them *together*, in the greatest Fulness and Affluence imaginable; yet even still they would want the two principal and most necessary Qualifications requisite to make a man truly Happy; namely *Perfection in Degree*, and *Continuance of Duration*. They cannot at best compleat the Satisfaction of man's mind;



S E R M. and if they *were* able to do this, yet they

XV.  could not continue long enough to maintain and preserve it. Whatever will make the Mind of man happy, must be able to satisfy it both in its whole Capacity and in its whole Duration; and whatever is not sufficient to effect This, cannot be man's chief and final Happiness. Now all these things put together, wherein worldly and irreligious minds usually place their Happiness, are at best infinitely deficient in *these two respects*: For

1<sup>st</sup>; T H E Y cannot make us happy in our whole, nor in the best part of our capacity. Man consists, of a Sensitive Body and of a Rational Soul, and 'tis either necessary to his well-being that he be happy in both these Parts; or, if he *may* possibly be happy by the Satisfaction of a Virtuous mind without any sensual and bodily Pleasure; yet 'tis very evident he cannot on the other side, be made happy by the pleasures of the *Body* only, without the Satisfaction of a Virtuous mind. The Capacity of man's mind, is great; and its Desires and Expectations, its Hopes and Fears are boundless: And

'tis

'tis well known by experience, that all the S E R M. enjoyments of the present life, without XV. Virtue and true Religion, can by no means either satisfy its desires and expectations, or prevent its fears and discontents. These things therefore, are greatly insufficient to make a man truly happy, since they cannot make him so in the best and principal part of his Being. But

2dly; SUPPOSING they were able to satisfy the whole capacity of a man's mind, yet they could not make him happy for the whole, nor for the greatest part of his Duration. Dying men are always sufficiently sensible of this; and living men, if they were wise, would see and understand this most important Truth, before their eyes were too late opened by the extremity of that last Necessity. Nothing can be more evident, than that Eternity bears no proportion to Time; and nothing can be plainer, than that these things which men dote upon now in the present Time, will do them no Service in the Ages of Eternity: Why then will they not see, that these things are not their true

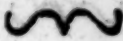
S E R M.

XV.

and proper Happiness? But all wicked and debauched persons are infatuated and blinded, and will place their Happiness in that which profiteth not. This therefore their opinion is their Folly, and, if they live according to it, must be their destruction.

HAVING thus shown, (which was the 2d thing I proposed,) that worldly and corrupt minds place all their Happiness in the sinful enjoyments of the present life; and that their choosing so to do, is their great error and folly; I proceed now in the

III. *Third* place to show, that virtuous and good men place their chief Happiness in the Knowledge and Favour of God; in the Practice of Virtue and true Religion; and that their acting according to this Principle, is the greatest and indeed the only true Wisdom: *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* For the clearer explication of which Proposition, I shall endeavour briefly to set forth, *wherein* this true Happiness

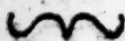
ness consists; and *in what respects* it excells S E R M.  
the Happiness, of sensual and corrupt XV.  
minds. And 

1<sup>st</sup>; THE *first* part of the Happiness of good men, consists in their Contemplating with Delight, and Meditating with Pleasure, on the Perfections of God the Supreme Good. These Perfections are manifested in the *Works*, and in the *Laws* of God; and good men according to their several capacities, contemplate with Pleasure, and meditate with Delight, upon the several manifestations of these divine Perfections. Virtuous minds, even of the meanest capacities, see enough in the most obvious and superficial view of the divine works, to excite in them a deep Sense and Admiration, of the Almighty Power, the Unsearchable Wisdom, and the Eternal Providence of God; and they see enough in the first and most easy representation of his Laws, to fill their Thoughts with the most awful Fear of his Justice, and with the most ardent Love of his abundant Goodness. But good men of larger capacities and greater advantages, see yet further into the Wisdom of the Works



SERM.

XV.



and of the Laws of God: The Contemplation therefore of these things, affords a great and solid Satisfaction to virtuous and religious minds; and this Satisfaction will grow up with the improvements of their Knowledge and Virtue here, to a perfect and unspeakable Happiness in the Enjoyments of the world to come.

2dly; THE next part of the Happiness of virtuous and good men, is the sense of God's present *favour* to them, arising from the Conscience of *their* agreeableness and conformity to *his* holy and divine Will. They know both from their natural notion of God, and from the revealed declarations of his Will, that the *light of his countenance* is, as the Text expresses it, *lift up upon* the Righteous, that is, that his Favour and Protection always *accompanies righteous and just* men; And by the testimony of their own conscience, compared with the written Word of God, they know and humbly rejoice that they themselves are in some measure *such*. The Favour therefore that God bears to virtuous and good men, they find belongs to themselves; and this affords them at all

all times and in all cases, a solid and rational Satisfaction. There is a careless Ease which arises from Errour, and there is a delusive Pleasure which arises from Wickedness; but Both these Satisfactions are short and inconstant; and they lead to Folly, and terminate in Misery. But this Happiness of virtuous and religious minds, which arises from the practice of Virtue and from the favour of God, is as certain and constant as the Nature and Constitution of things, as the Truth and Veracity of God; and cannot be taken from them, even by Persecution itself.

3dly; THIS Happiness of righteous and good men is compleated and perfected, by the *expectation* of eternal Rewards, with which *Hope* they are supported *here*; and by the actual *possession* of them, which they shall enjoy *hereafter*. This is a Happiness equal to the Desires and Hopes of a rational and immortal Soul; a Happiness, *worthy of God* to give, and *adequate* to the capacity of an *immortal* spirit to desire. In this state, all the desires and expectations of the soul will be turned into Fruition; and all its hopes will be

SERM. swallowed up in the real enjoyment of in-  
 XV. expressible Felicity. In a word, all its  
 faculties and capacities will here be satisfied, and That Satisfaction will live and continue, as long as the immortal soul itself.

HAVING thus briefly described, *what* the Happiness of righteous and good men is; I presume we need not enter into a particular comparison of it with the Happiness of vicious and corrupt minds, to show *in what respects* it is superiour to theirs; and to demonstrate that good mens preferring this solid and substantial Happiness, before the empty and deceitful pleasures of Sin, is the greatest and indeed the only true Wisdom. I shall only observe in a word, that this Happiness, which is the Reward of Virtue, exceeds all other pleasures infinitely, in the two forementioned essential Qualifications of Happiness; viz. Perfection in Degree, and Continuance of Duration. The Psalmist thus describes them both: Ps. xvi. 11; *In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

THE Application, wherewith I shall SERM.  
conclude, shall be This only: That from XV.  
what has been said, there arises matter of  
great comfort to virtuous and good men  
at *all* times, but *especially* at the hour of  
death. Vicious minds place their Happi-  
ness in the enjoyment of the Pleasures of  
this sinful world; and when this world  
comes to an End, as it does to every man  
at the Conclusion of his own life; where  
then will *their* Happiness be? But he that  
places his Happiness in the Knowledge,  
and Love, and Imitation of God, in fol-  
lowing the dictates of Reason and true  
Religion, *here*; shall enjoy it also in these  
things *hereafter*; for God, and *his* Perfec-  
tions, continue for ever. And when the  
righteous shall shine forth in That Day,  
as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father;  
then shall the Wicked be sensible of their  
own Folly, and shall cry out, as it is most  
elegantly expressed in the book of *Wisdom*,  
ch. v. 4; *We fools accounted his Life mad-  
ness, and his End to be without Honour;  
How is he numbred among the children of  
God, and his Lot is among the Saints!*



# CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

Article I  
Section 1  
All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.  
Section 2  
The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors in that State.  
No Representative or Person in Office shall be a Citizen of another State, but when elected he shall have seven Years Residence in that State, and when elected he shall have been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and seven Years a Resident in that State in which he shall be chosen.  
The House of Representatives shall elect their Speaker and other Officers; and they may determine the Rules of their Proceedings.  
They may, by a two thirds Majority, remove from Office any Judge or Officer of the United States, who shall have been impeached by the House of Representatives.  
They may adjourn from Year to Year, but no longer than to the next Meeting of the Legislature of the State in which they shall be chosen.  
Section 3  
The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have the Qualifications requisite for Senators in that State.  
No Senator or Person in Office shall be a Citizen of another State, but when elected he shall have seven Years Residence in that State, and when elected he shall have been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and seven Years a Resident in that State in which he shall be chosen.  
The Senate shall elect their President and other Officers; and they may determine the Rules of their Proceedings.  
They may, by a two thirds Majority, remove from Office any Judge or Officer of the United States, who shall have been impeached by the Senate.  
They may adjourn from Year to Year, but no longer than to the next Meeting of the Legislature of the State in which they shall be chosen.  
Section 4  
The Times, Places and Manner of holding the Elections of Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law alter or add to the Rules and Regulations of the Legislatures of the States, with respect to the Times, Places and Manner of holding such Elections, except as to the Places of Elections of Senators and Representatives.

## ARTICLE II

### Section 1

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.



# SERMON XVI.

That Godliness generally makes  
Men happy in this Life.



1 TIM. iv. 8.

*---Godliness is profitable to all things, ha-  
ving promise of the Life that now is.---*



HERE being several Passages SERM.  
XVI.  
in Scripture, wherein on the  
one hand blessings and great  
prosperity, are promised to the  
righteous ; with length of life, and every  
thing that can conduce to make it happy ;  
with the Love of God, and the Favour of  
Men ; And yet on the other hand there  
being not fewer Texts, wherein the af-  
flictions of good Men in this present  
World

S E R M. World are emphatically described; where-  
 XVI. in all things are declared to come alike to  
 all; or, if there be any difference, that  
 the righteous are sure to have the greatest  
 share in afflictions and disappointments,  
 in Troubles and Persecutions of all kinds:  
 From these words of the Apostle therefore,  
 I shall endeavour at this time to set this  
 matter in its true light, and show how  
 far and in what sense each of these seem-  
 ingly different declarations must be un-  
 derstood to be properly and strictly  
 true.

T H A T Virtue and good Manners do in  
 their own nature *tend*, to promote the  
 Happiness both of Mankind in general,  
 and of every single person in particular,  
 is evident and undeniable; and if all men  
 were sincerely religious, (so that the num-  
 berless Miseries and Calamities arising from  
 the Wickedness of Men, were prevented,)  
 this truth would visibly evidence itself in  
 fact, and appear experimentally in the  
 Happy State and Constitution of the  
 World: For almost all the Calamities we  
 Now feel, do apparently proceed from  
 Mens Vices: Wars and Desolations and all  
 their

their consequent Miseries, are the manifest effects either of unbounded Ambition, or of unreasonable Revenge: Private quarrels and contentions, arise all either from open malice, or from secret and groundless peevishness: Poverty and Want comes not often upon men, but either through their own Negligence, or by the Fraud, Injustice, and Oppression of others: Sickness and Diseases themselves, are frequently and in great measure the consequences of Intemperance; brought by men upon themselves, or perhaps inherited from their Parents: Nay, even those extraordinary calamities, which seem least of all to have any dependence upon mens own actions, such as Plagues and Pestilences, Fires, Famines, and the like; even these are still the Consequences of Sin; being Judgments inflicted by the direction of Providence, for the punishment of Nations, Families, or particular Persons.

COULD All Men be prevailed upon to be pious toward God; sober and diligent in their *own* affairs; just and faithful in their dealings; and friendly and charitable, according to their abilities, to *others*; the  
Hap-



366 *That Godliness generally makes*

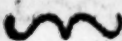
SER M. Happiness of the World would be greater,  
 XVI. than can easily be imagined. But since  
 this is more than can be hoped for; yet every person, by doing his *own* duty, may contribute something towards so great a Benefit, and at least do much towards his *own particular* Happiness: Especially if we add to this, the Blessing of God, and the Protection of Providence; which without controversy cannot but be generally most favourable to virtuous and good men. The Wiser Philosophers among the Heathens themselves, did not fail to make Observations of this matter, and to improve it in their discourses for the encouragement of virtue. In Scripture, God's Promises of this nature to the *Jews*, are innumerable: Length of days, riches and honour, safety from their enemies, or victory over them; are promised in numberless places of the *Old Testament*: And even in the *New Testament*, St Paul writing to a *Christian* Bishop, tells him, that *godliness has the promise of the Life that now is*; 1 Tim. iv. 8. But suppose all these things to Fail; and that a Good man comes short of all those Blessings which

which are generally consequent upon Vir-  
tue; and not only so, but be moreover  
hated, afflicted, and persecuted for the sake  
of Virtue and true Religion: In this Case,  
a settled Peace in a man's own Conscience,  
a well-grounded assurance of the Favour  
of God, and the Love and Affection of all  
unprejudiced Good Men, will still attend  
him; and no Force can deprive him of  
*Them*. These are Things *so* considerable,  
and of *so great* weight, that our Saviour  
himself seems to make them an hundred-  
fold better, than what a man in Persecu-  
tion ordinarily loses; and some have  
strained this Argument so far, as to af-  
firm Virtue to be a sufficient reward to  
itself in all Cases, even though it had no  
respect to a future reward.

S E R M.  
XVI.  
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BUT now if we view things as they
are frequently represented on the other
side, we shall have a very different and al-
most contrary prospect. For though it
be indeed undeniably certain, that Virtue
has both in itself the true foundations of
happiness, and also the greatest probabili-
ties of the concurrence of outward causes to
promote its prosperity in the World; yet
in

SERM. in event 'tis by experience found true,

XVI.  that the Wickedness of the greater part of Mankind does so far prevail against nature and reason, as often to oppress the Virtue of the Few. Good men are frequently afflicted and impoverished, and made a prey to the Covetousness and Ambition of the wicked. Providence itself seems sometimes to withdraw its interposition, and suffers the Righteous to be involved promiscuously in many Calamities with the Wicked. The Philosophers of old observed this; and from the unequal distribution of good and evil in the present life, wisely and strongly argued for the certainty of a future. The *Jews*, to whom were made especial Promises of Temporal good, had yet experience enough of this truth, to raise their minds from the enjoyment of this world to the expectation of a better. *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, though they were the chosen and beloved of God, yet *few and evil were the days of their Pilgrimage, and at last they themselves received not the Promise; but looked for a City hereafter, which hath foundations, whose Builder and*
Maker

Maker is God. David, though a man af- SERM.
XVI.
ter God's own heart, excepting in the in-

stance of one great Crime; yet lived almost all his days in trouble and sorrow; and at that very time, he saw the wicked in such prosperity, as raised scruples in his mind concerning the Providence of God, and the Equity of its distributions. Solomon after him observed, that all things in this world came alike to all; that it fared with the righteous as with the wicked; and that no man could judge either of the Love or Hatred of God towards him, by what happened to him in this present Life. Or if God did deliver them, (as he sometimes did in a miraculous manner,) from Judgments of his own immediate inflicting, yet were they still persecuted by the malice of wicked and cruel men: They were stoned, (as the Apostle elegantly represents it in the xith to the Hebrews,) they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: Of whom the world was not worthy: They wandered in deserts, and in moun-

SERM. *tains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*

XVI.

And all this happened to good men even in the time of the *Jewish* dispensation. Under the *Gospel*, the State of things may seem to be yet much worse. Christianity itself proposes hardships and mortification, afflictions and bearing the Cross, persecution and sufferings; and the malice of wicked men have improved these evils so far to the disadvantage of the righteous, as that St *Paul* himself confesses, *if in this life only we had hope, Christians were of all men the most miserable.* All these things must be acknowledged to be true; and yet at the same time it must also be confessed on the other side; that Godliness hath certainly in some respect the promise of *this* life, as well as of that which is to come. It may not therefore be improper, nor without its just Use; to state the limits of these two different appearances of things, and to consider in what Sense each of them is properly to be understood; rather than to describe singly either the advantages or disadvantages of virtue in the present Life, further than the nature of things and the

mixt

mixt circumstances of this State will justly bear. S E R M.
XVI.

I. *First* then; It is to be observed, that under the *Jewish* dispensation, temporal promises were most expressly made to Obedience: And most particularly, with regard to the *national Success* of the righteous against their *publick* Enemies. So that *Moses* had great reason to cry out, *Deut. xxxii. 29*; *O that they were wise, that they understood these things! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up!* In like manner *David* in many of his *Psalms* describes with great emphasis the blessedness of the righteous: Thus *Pf. i. 3*. *He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper*: Again (*Pf. cxii. 1.*) *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments; his seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed; Riches and plentifulness shall be in his house, and his right-*

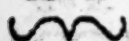
SERM. *teousness indureth for ever. And again*
 XVI. *Pf. xci. throughout. Whoso dwelleth under*
 *the defence of the most High, shall abide*
under the Shadow of the Almighty: He
shall deliver thee from the snare of the hun-
ter, and from the noisome pestilence; Thou
shalt not be afraid for any terrour by night,
nor for the arrow that flieth by day; For
the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor
for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-
day; A thousand shall fall beside thee, and
ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall
not come nigh thee; There shall no evil hap-
pen unto thee, nor any plague come nigh
thy dwelling. (And Prov. iii. 16, 17.) But
now under the Gospel-dispensation, where-
in Life and Immortality are more clearly
brought to light, and the eternal rewards
and punishments of a future State more
expressly revealed; Providence may seem
to be much less exact in the distribution of
temporal things: there being no reason,
that good men should now expect, such
a constant affluence of temporal blessings;
since the eternal happiness of their future
State is so fully and plainly discovered to
them: and on the other hand there be-
ing

ing no necessity that temporal judgments S E R M.
should now so certainly overtake the wick- XVI.
ed, since the eternal wrath of God is so
expressly revealed from Heaven against all
their ungodliness and unrighteous deal-
ings. But this Observation alone, is not
sufficient: For *good* men, even under the
Jewish dispensation were frequently op-
pressed and afflicted; being either invol-
ved in publick calamities sent down by
the Judgments of God, or persecuted and
destroyed by the malice and injustice of
Men: So that the righteous very seldom
enjoyed the Benefit of God's temporal
blessings, except when in the days of wise
and pious Princes the whole Nation was
under a general disposition, to live in
regular Obedience to the Law of God.
And in such a Case as That, Righteous-
ness now under the *Christian* Dispensation
would certainly flourish with very great
temporal blessings, as well as it did in the
times of the *Jews*; and Virtue would en-
joy the promises of the *present* life, as
well as of that which is to come.

II. *Secondly*; THEREFORE, it is to be
observed in the *next* place, and the Obser-
vation

S E R M.

XVI.



vation holds *more* universally true; that Religion and Virtue, whenever they obtain *generally*, so as to prevail in a *nation*, do bring along with them very great temporal blessings. Godliness hath the promise of the Life that now is; that is, where it becomes the temper and habit of a people; where it is entertained and prevails so far, as to have room to produce its just and natural effects; there it establishes great and lasting happiness. *Particular* pious Persons may be very unprosperous, and unsuccessful in their worldly affairs; nay, may meet with the greatest Discouragements and misfortunes whatsoever: But for the most part, the reason *why* any virtuous Man falls into any such calamity, is not because he himself is religious, but because others about him are *not* so: So that the proper and natural effect of Virtue, is to make men happy; and the only reason why at any time it does not actually produce That Effect; is because it does not sufficiently prevail. *Righteousness*, saith Solomon, *exalteth a nation*, but *sin is a reproach to any people*, Prov. xiv. 34; that is; tho' it may sometimes

times happen otherwise in *single* and *private* cases, yet *this* is the natural and *universal* Effect of things, in their *general* and proper Tendency; And particular good mens being hated, persecuted, and oppressed, is no more contrary to what the Apostle affirms of Godliness having the promise of this life, than any other cause can therefore justly be said not to be what it is, because for want of being rightly applied, or by being for the present overpowered through the prevalency of some greater opposite strength, it be hindered from producing its just and natural effect. Virtue and Righteousness are clearly the only means, that *can* make men happy even in this present state; and if all men would be truly and sincerely religious; the promise of God would have its full accomplishment, and men *would* generally be reasonably happy, even here upon earth. What particular good men suffer here through other mens vices, shall be abundantly recompensed to them hereafter in a future State; but if other men would be also religious, as *they* are, they would all become generally happy

S E R M.
XVI.

SERM. both here as well as hereafter. In Paradise God created man innocent, and placed him in a happy seat; and if he had continued his innocency, he had also continued his happiness; and his posterity, if *they* had likewise continued innocent, would have continued to have been made happy by their Religion and Virtue *here*; and that happiness would only have been continued and increased, by God's free gift of eternal Life to them hereafter. But man fell soon into Sin; and God thereupon cursed the earth for his sake, and destroyed the beauty of that divine Workmanship, because man was not worthy to continue in so happy a Seat. After this, death and misery entered into the world by Sin; and besides God's curse upon the earth, the wicked lives of men have all along made them doubly miserable, by an innumerable train of calamities and follies. Nevertheless, even in this corrupt estate, whatever unequal Sufferings particular good persons have fallen into, 'tis certain that whole Nations have almost always been proportionably prosperous or miserable, as they improved in Virtue or degenerated

degenerated into Vice. The Roman Historians assure us, that the foundations of that great empire were laid in the Frugality, Temperance, and exact Justice of their Ancestours; But when the Luxury and Vices of some neighbouring Nations crept in and began to spread among them; that brave people, who from nothing grew by their Virtue to be Masters of the world, weakned afterwards by their Vices fell again to Nothing; and their mighty empire came by degrees to be divided among their conquered Nations. But not to fetch examples from profane histories; 'tis very largely recorded in Scripture, how great and happy the people of the *Jews* were, when under any pious Prince, they lived in remarkable obedience to the law of God. 'Tis related particularly of *Solomon*, that *God gave him peace from all his enemies round about, and that he passed all the Kings of the Earth in riches and wisdom, and that he made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees as the sycamores, which are in the low plains, for abundance;* 2 Chron. ix. 22, 27. In like manner under the *Christian* dispensation, great is the
peace,

S E R M. peace and happiness which the prophets
 XVI. foretell should happen, *when the Kingdom of
 the Messiah should be established upon the
 earth; and Princes, who call themselves
 Christians, should agree to promote Christi-
 anity indeed: The wolf shall dwell with
 the Lamb, and the leopard shall lie down
 with the kid, and the calf and the young
 lion and the fatling together, and a little
 child shall lead them; Isaiah xi. 6. Which
 prophecies do at least signify thus much,
 that if the religion of Christ were uni-
 versally embraced and duly practised, so
 as to have its natural and full effect, it
 would fill the world with very great peace
 and happiness; when righteousness were
 established as an universal Law, and the
 earth were full of the knowledge of the
 Lord, as the waters cover the Seas: When
 unreasonable contentions and uncharitable
 divisions among Christians, arising from
 Ambition and Love of Worldly Power,
 shall be laid aside, and all men shall agree
 in that great Rule of Unity and Charity,
 the everlasting Gospel. When that Mother
 of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth
 shall be destroyed; which has caused all Na-
 tions*

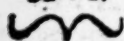
tions to drink of the wine of her fornication; and has presumed to sit in the seat of God, and to change laws and times, and to equal the Doctrines of men with the commandments of God, and to use force and violence in matters of Religion, so that in her is found the blood of all that were slain upon the earth. All which is so plainly declared in the Holy Scriptures, that one of the great Artifices by which religious Tyranny has been kept up in the World, has been the discouraging men from considering soberly the prophetick part of the *New Testament*. 'Tis evident therefore, that true Religion and Virtue, whenever they obtain generally and are practised in a Nation, do bring along with them very great temporal Blessings. But

III. *Thirdly*; As to the case of particular and private Persons; about whom is much the greatest difficulty; there are several considerations necessary to be taken in, in order to determine with any exactness, how far Godliness having the promise of the present Life, can be applied to *Them* in this mixt and disorderly state of things. And

1st;

SERM.

XVI.



1st; RELIGION and Piety does not generally alter the natural circumstances, or the relative states and conditions of Men. If a man be Poor, or be a Servant or Slave, his being pious and religious will not certainly make him rich, or gain him his Freedom. The distinctions of Mens Quality and Estates, are *not* always proportionable to their Virtue; nor did God ever design that Riches and Honour should be the constant rewards of Religion, or a mean Fortune the Punishment of Sin. These Differences of Circumstances are the necessary result of the present establishment of humane Societies; and men ought not to expect that God should generally interpose by his immediate power to alter these things, though indeed he seems *sometimes* to do so by especial providences. St Paul tells *Servants*, (that is *Slaves*, in those times;) *that they must not expect by receiving Christianity to be released from their Slavery; 1 Cor. vii. 20. Let every man, says he, abide in the same calling wherein he was called; Art thou called being a Servant? i. e. a Slave? care not for it; but if thou mayst be made free, use it rather:*

Men happy in this Life.

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rather : that is, if a man could obtain his freedom, he might lawfully desire it ; but if he could not, he ought not to look upon That as a mark of the displeasure of God. In like manner, if a man can in the practice of righteousness and charity become rich, he *may* receive the blessing of God with thankfulness : but he ought by no means to expect, that this should be the necessary consequence of his being truly religious. When one of the Scribes came to our Saviour, and offered to follow him whithersoever he went, expecting (as the circumstances of the History seem to imply,) that *when Jesus was made King, his disciples should come to great honour* ; our Lord rebuked him and told him he was in a great mistake if he had any such expectations ; *for the foxes, says he, have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head* ; St Matt. viii. 20. Thus Religion does not generally alter the natural circumstances, or the relative States and Conditions of men : But then *this* it does, which is much more considerable ; it teaches every man how to be content, and

SERM.
XVI.

SERM. and to make that state, wherein God has
 XVI. placed him, easy and comfortable to him-
 self. If it does not make a Servant free, yet it may give him that Greatness and Liberty of mind, which is a far greater blessing than bodily freedom; *He that is called in the Lord, saith St Paul, being a Servant, is the Lord's free man; 1 Cor. vii. 22.* In like manner, if Virtue and Diligence does not always enable a poor man to become rich, yet it may give him a mind free from unreasonable desires, and from the want of riches; and This with the blessing of God, may make him much more happy even in the present life, than riches themselves would do.

2dly; Godliness and true Holiness does not exempt men from the unavoidable casualties of nature, such as Sicknes, Death, and the like. From *many* indeed of these Calamities, which often untimely surprize debauched Persons, and are plainly the Consequences of Intemperance, of their Sin and Folly; from These a regular and virtuous course of life does in a great measure secure men: But *some* of these things are by the necessity of our Nature
 and

and by the decree of God now made S E R M.
wholly unavoidable, and Death is equally XVI.
inexorable both to the righteous and the
wicked. But then *Godliness* teaches men
how to bear Sickness, and it teaches them
also not to fear Death; but to look upon
it only as a passage out of this sinful
world to a glorious immortality; and This
without controversy is the greatest Hap-
piness, which a man can possibly arrive
at in the present Life.

3dly; **RIGHTEOUSNESS** and Piety do
not exempt men from such afflictions, as
God sees necessary either to make trial of
their Virtue, or to make an example of it.
Some Virtues, such as Patience and Resig-
nation, could hardly otherwise be exercised
at all; and without question the reward of
Virtue, must not be such as to prevent the
making proof of it. *Job* was a very ex-
traordinary good man, and God was
pleased to try him with extraordinary great
afflictions; *and when he was tried he came
forth as gold*, and became doubly a great-
er man than if he had never been afflict-
ed: But if he had never come out of his
affliction at all, yet he had abundantly
sufficient

S E R M. sufficient wherewith to support himself;
 XVI. and when he saw no hopes or appearance
 of relief, he could still say: *Though God*
slay me, yet will I trust in him, and I will
maintain my own ways before him; He
also shall be my salvation, for an hypocrite
shall not come before him; Job xiii. 15.

4thly; RELIGION and VIRTUE does not always secure men, from all the Consequences of their own former Sins. From the worst indeed of their Consequences, from the violent terrours of Conscience, and the eternal wrath of God, from These it does indeed deliver them; But mens former Sins often sow the seeds of future lasting calamities, and God is not obliged, when he pardons mens Sins, to remove all the natural ill consequences of their Folly. David's great Sin was pardoned upon his Confessing it, 2 Sam. xii. 13; *The Lord hath put away thy Sin, thou shalt not die:* Nevertheless the bad consequences of that Sin followed him all the days of his Life, and his Penitential and other Psalms are standing testimonies of his affliction for it.

5thly and *Lastly*; RIGHTEOUSNESS and true Holiness does not secure men from the Consequences of *other* mens Sins also; from Oppression and unrighteous Judgment; from Fraud, from Violence and Persecutions. If *all* men indeed, were sincerely Religious; they would all (as was before observed) be generally very happy in *this* Life, as well as in that which is to come; and this would sufficiently make good the Apostle's assertion, that *Godliness bath the promise of the life that now is*: But Men by their Sins and Follies make *themselves* miserable, and *others* also; and good men who are not unhappy by their *own* Sins, may be made unhappy for a Season, by the wickedness and perverseness of *others*. This is what our Saviour warns us of, *that he who will be his Disciple, must take up his Cross and follow him*; and the Apostle, *Acts xiv. 22*; *that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*. But then on the other hand we ought also to observe; that this Holiness of Life, and suffering for the sake of Virtue and and True Religion, is accompanied with

S E R M. such inward Peace and Satisfaction of
 XVI. Mind, such Love and Assistance of all
 good Men, and such a certain assurance
 of the Favour of God, as our Saviour
 himself pronounces to be an hundred-
 fold greater, *even in this present life*,
 than all the Losses and Afflictions we can
 sustain.

T H E Summ of what has been said,
 is this. Though *Godliness* hath the pro-
 mise of the present life, and the natural
 probability of things to make men hap-
 py in it, yet good men are liable to
 very many and very great afflictions: But
 then wicked men are also subject to all
 the same afflictions through their own Sins,
 and to much greater calamities through
 the righteous judgment of God; and good
 men are free from many calamities,
 which bad men bring upon themselves
 by Intemperance and Quarrels, and in-
 numerable other Vices and Follies: And
 those Calamities which good Men do
 not escape, they are infinitely better able
 to bear, than wicked men are: For *the*
Spirit of a man, especially when sup-
 ported by the assistance of the Spirit of
 God,

God, will sustain his infirmity; but a SERM.
wounded Spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. XVI.

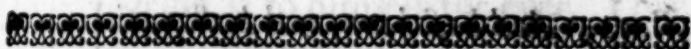
14. To all the Sufferings of the wicked there is added this one intolerable circumstance, that they have no comfort wherewith to support their Spirits, either from themselves or from without: They stand condemned by the judgment of their own conscience; and they either know that God himself also condemns them, or (which is not much better) they are forced to rest only upon the vain hopes, the weak and groundless suspicions of Infidelity. But good men, though they do fall into great afflictions, are yet supported by the *Strength of Virtue*, by the *Confidence of a good Conscience*, by the *Love and Assistance of all unprejudiced men*, and (which is more than all) by the *Assurance of God's Favour*, who will certainly either deliver them in the *present life*, or reward them in the *future*. For *Godliness* hath the promise not only of *this life*, but of *that also which is to come*.

Col. will allow the right of the people to be
To all the sufferings of the world
are as related this one inevitable cir-
cumstance, that they have no comfort
themselves to support their souls, either
from themselves or from without. They
and condemned by the judgment of their
own conscience; and they either know
that God himself also condemns them,
(which is not much better) they are
rested only upon the vain hopes
of weak and groundless notions of in-
finity. But good men, though they do
not see great afflictions, are yet suppo-
sing the strength of a power by the con-
science of a good Conscience by the force
of assistance of all unperjudiced men, and
which is more than all) by the as-
sistance of God's favour, who will certain-
ly deliver them in the present life,
toward them in the future. For God
will keep the promise, not only of this
life, but of that which is to come.



SERMON XVII.

Perseverance in Religion the only
Title to the Reward of it.



R E V. ii. 7, latter part.

*To him that overcometh, will I give to eat
of the tree of life, which is in the midst
of the paradise of God.*



THE second and third chapters S E R M.
of this book of the *Revela-* XVII.
tion, contain certain Admo-
nitions in form of Epistles,

sent from our Saviour by the
Apostle St *John* to the Angels or Bishops
of the Seven Churches of *Asia*. In these
Epistles our Saviour either commends their
Virtue and exhorts to Perseverance; or
reproves their Failings and exhorts them

SERM. to Repent ; and each of the seven Epistles
 XVII. he concludes with a Promise of great and
 eternal Happiness, to him that shall over-
 come. The Text is part of the Epistle to
 the Angel of the Church of *Ephesus* ;
 which begins with a commendation of his
 patience, ver. 2 ; *I know thy works and
 thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou
 canst not bear them which are evil, and
 thou hast tried them which say they are
 Apostles and are not, and hast found them
 liars ; And hast born, and hast patience, and
 for my name's sake hast laboured and hast not
 fainted :* Then follows a kind and affectio-
 nate reproof for his beginning to remit of
 his first zeal, with an exhortation to re-
 pent, ver. 4 ; *Nevertheless I have somewhat
 against thee, because thou hast left thy first
 love ; Remember therefore from whence thou
 art fallen, and repent, and do the first
 works :* And then he concludes in the
 words of the Text ; *To him that over-
 cometh, will I give to eat of the tree of
 life, which is in the midst of the paradise
 of God. I will give him to eat of the tree
 of life ; i. e. I will give him immortality
 and eternal life. It seems to be an allu-
 sion to the description of paradise in which*
 our

our first parents were placed; Gen. ii. 8; S E R M.
The Lord God planted a garden eastward XVII.
in Eden; and there he put the man
whom he had formed; and out of the
ground the Lord God made to grow every
tree that is pleasant to the sight and good
for food, the tree of life also in the midst
of the garden. That is; To all the pro-
visions of happiness, which God had made
for man; This was superadded as the
crown of all, that there was a possibility
of his securing it to himself for ever. This
is what was emblematically represented by
the tree of life. Now as 'tis *there* related,
that our first parents, by reason of their
being overcome and conquered by Sin,
were driven out of Paradise; and thence-
forth excluded from the way of the tree
of life, lest they should eat thereof and
live for ever; So *here* our Saviour promises
on the contrary, that he that overcomes
and conquers Sin, shall be restored to the
Hopes from whence our first Parents fell,
and be again admitted to eat of the tree of
life, which is in the midst of the Paradise
of God. As by Sin against the *first* of
God's commandments, the hopes of Im-
mortality and eternal Life were forfeited;

SERM. So by Obedience to the Gospel of Christ,
 XVII. which is the *last* revelation of his Will,
 Immortality and eternal Life shall be re-
 gained.

To him that Overcomes; i. e. to him who, notwithstanding all the temptations of a sinful and corrupt world, yet patiently perseveres in the Faith of Christ and in Obedience to his commands. The life of a Christian, is in Scripture frequently compared to a Warfare; and very many places, without expressing the similitude at large, do yet directly refer and allude to it. *Fight the good fight of Faith*, saith St Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 12; and *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course*, 2 Tim. iv. 7; with many other the like passages. The thing proposed, for which a Christian contends; is Happiness and Life eternal. The *Enemies* which are represented as opposing him, and which would hinder him from attaining that Happiness, are the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. If, notwithstanding the force of all these Temptations, he perseveres in his Faith and his Obedience, he is said in Scripture to *Overcome*; if by any of these he be prevailed

only Title to the Reward of it.

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prevailed upon to forsake his duty, and S E R M. to commit Sin, he *is* Overcome by them. XVII.

And unless he renews his diligence, and by a more vigorous resolution conquers those temptations which before conquered him, he must lose his reward. The great temptation with which the *Primitive* Christians were assaulted, was *Persecution*; by which they were tempted to deny the Truth, and to renounce that holy Religion which they had once embraced, to renounce it by returning again to the idolatrous worship of the heathen Gods. This was *Their* particular conflict and trial; And He that in that great trial resisted unto blood, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of Sin for a season; was said in a peculiar and more emphatical sense to have *Overcome*. And to those persons we must understand these promises of our Saviour, to be principally and more *immediately* made; *He that overcometh shall inherit all things*; Rev. xxi. 7: And, *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*; ch. iii. ver. 21.

These

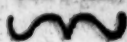
S E R M.
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These promises, I say, we must understand to be primarily and most immediately directed to those primitive disciples, who, in that great trial of Persecution, should hold out unto the end, and be slain for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. But that they proportionably belong to all *other* Christians also, who in the midst of any *other* temptations should maintain their integrity, and persevere in the practice of Virtue unto the end; is plain both from the tenour of the Scripture, which sometimes explains this term *Overcoming* by the equivalent expression of *keeping the works of Christ unto the end*, as *Rev. ii. 26*; and 'tis also evident from the Nature of the thing itself: For the Promise is not made to him that overcometh, for That reason because 'tis *this* or *that particular* temptation that he overcomes, but because he maintains his virtue and integrity to the end, notwithstanding the force of any temptation to the contrary. The full meaning therefore of the words, is briefly this: He that having embraced the Gospel of Christ, and being firmly perswaded of the Truth of his religion, shall continue steadfast in this Faith

Faith and in the Obedience thereof, notwithstanding all the threatnings of Persecution on the one hand, and the temptations of the Pleasures of Sin on the other; shall as a conquerour receive the Crown of eternal Life, and have an entrance ministred to him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of God. *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.*

S E R M.

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FROM the words thus explained, I shall endeavour 1st, to show, that all the Promises in the *New Testament*, are made only to those, who shall persevere in well-doing unto the end: *To him that overcometh.* And 2^{dly}, I shall apply this to *ourselves*, by considering distinctly *what* it is, that in our *present* circumstances may be stiled Perseverance.

I. *First*; ALL the Promises in the *New Testament*, are made only to those, who shall persevere to the End. The Christian life is a spiritual Warfare, wherein we must *fight against* the temptations of a *present* sinful and corrupt world, for the Glory and Happiness that shall be revealed *hereafter*. And the reward is promised,

S E R M. mised, not to him that shall fight, but to him
XVII. that shall overcome. Our Saviour plainly
warns us, that no man putting his hand to
the plow, and looking back, is meet for the
Kingdom of God ; and not only *authorizes*,
but *commands* us to apply to this purpose
the Example of *Lot's Wife*. And God by
the Prophet declares, and repeats it by the
Apostle, that if any man draws back, his
soul shall have no pleasure in him. We
are told in Scripture, *that many should embrace the doctrine of Christ, and receive his word even with joy ; but because in time of temptation they would fall away, having loved the corruptions of this present world, it should profit them nothing to have once been believers ; seeing the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, have, as our Saviour expresses it, choaked the word, and made it become unfruitful*. In which case, it cannot be but they must lose their reward : For, *He that endureth to the end, saith our Saviour, the same shall be saved* ; St Matt. xxiv. 13. *Not every one that saith unto him, Lord, Lord ; not every one that embraces his religion, and makes profession of it ; Nay, not every one that*
receiveth

receiveth his word with gladness, and obeys it for a time even with some degree perhaps of Sincerity; but he that *with patience and constancy* maintains his resolutions, and notwithstanding the numerous temptations of a sinful world, preserves his integrity to the end; *he only* has a certain title to inherit the Promise; *he who by patient continuance in well-doing*, as St Paul expresses it, *seeks for glory, and honour, and immortality*, Rom. ii. 7; and *holds the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end*; Heb. iii. 14. For otherwise, if, after good beginnings, men fall away again into a state of Sin, the having formerly been partakers of the Grace of God, and having tasted of the heavenly gift; instead of being any advantage to them, will on the contrary only enlarge their Guilt, and encrease their Condemnation. If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world thro' the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning: *And it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness at all, than after they*

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SERMON. *they have known it, to turn from the holy*
 XVII. *commandment delivered unto them; 2 Pet.*

ii. 20. For as, when a wicked man turns away from all his Sins which he has committed, and does for the future that which is lawful and right, all his past Wickedness shall not be mentioned unto him in judgment: So on the contrary, when a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth; there is the very same reason, that then all his righteousness should be forgotten and not mentioned unto him, unless it be to increase his Condemnation, and to convince him that his Wickedness is the more inexcusable, by having been, against clearer knowledge, the more deliberate and wilful. This whole Life is a state of Trial and Probation; and however we may have begun well, yet if we leave off before our work be done, and suffer ourselves by the ill example of a corrupt world, to be seduced out of the paths of Virtue, we are beguiled of our reward. *They that run in a race, says the Apostle, run all; but 'tis not they that run, but they that continue to run without fainting*

fainting to the end, that shall obtain the prize. Men are very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, by imagining that some zealous warmth of devotion, and the setting apart some *particular seasons* for religious *Acts*, instead of the *habitual* course of a virtuous life, will be looked upon as a running the Christian race. But let them not suffer themselves to be so deluded. If this can be stiled *running*, yet it is not so as to obtain: If it can at all be stiled *fighting*, yet it is not so as to conquer, but to be overcome. Our Saviour has warned us to *watch*, (that is, to follow righteousness in the whole course of our lives,) and to be ready *always*; to have our loins girded about and our lights burning, and to be like men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately; Luk. xii. 35. And again, Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares; For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch

SERMON. *ye therefore and pray always, that ye may*
 XVII. *be accounted worthy to escape all these things*
 ~~~~~ *that shall come to pass, and to stand be-*  
*fore the Son of man; St Luk. xxi. 34.*

The Apostles also in their Epistles are perpetually warning us, to *watch* and to *take heed*, lest at any time we fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble us, and thereby we be defiled. 'Tis not therefore a few faint and fruitless resolutions (concerning which our Saviour forewarns us, that *many shall so seek to enter in, and shall not be able;*) but 'tis only a *constant and patient persevering* in well-doing to the End, to which all the Promises in the *New Testament* are made.

II. WE are now in the *Second* place, to apply this to ourselves; by considering distinctly *what* it is, that in our *present* circumstances may be stiled *Perseverance*. And This in brief *is*, our continuing as stedfastly to resist the temptations of *Vice*, as the Primitive Christians resisted the temptations to *Apostacy*, and overcame in the great trial of *Persecution*. When a man is in that state described by St Paul in the *viith* chapter of his Epistle to the  
*Romans,*

Romans, that he is convinced of the evil of great and known Sins, and sets his mind to resist and strive against them; yet, through the viciousness of his inclination or the force of evil habits, he frequently relapses and is entangled in them again; 'tis a sign indeed that such a one is not yet *hardened* through the deceitfulness of Sin; there is great hopes, that through the grace of God he may at length prevail and overcome his temptations; but he has not yet actually overcome; nor can he be said to have done so, till he has brought himself into such a state, as that he has clearly prevailed over his usual temptations to known Sins, and has attained a reasonable and well-grounded assurance, that, through the grace of God, he shall not, at least habitually, fall into them any more. The Notion which the Scripture gives us of *Baptism*, that is, in those who at riper years were converted to Christ's religion; is, that it should be an obligation upon them, absolutely to forsake all their past Sins, and to walk from thenceforward in all Holiness and godly Conversation. Thus St Paul himself argues, Rom. vi. 3; *Know*



SERMON. ye not, that so many of us as were baptiz-  
 XVII. ed into Jesus Christ, were baptizd into  
 his death? Therefore we are buried with  
 him by baptism into death; that, like as  
 Christ was raised up from the dead by the  
 glory of the Father, even so we also should  
 walk in newness of life; Knowing this,  
 that our old man is crucified with him,  
 that the body of Sin might be destroyed,  
 that henceforth we should not serve Sin.  
 And ver. 9; Knowing that Christ being  
 raised from the dead dieth no more, death  
 hath no more dominion over him; Likewise  
 reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed  
 unto Sin, but alive unto God through Je-  
 sus Christ our Lord; Let not Sin therefore  
 reign in your mortal body, that ye should  
 obey it in the lusts thereof. The intent of  
 which Argument is plainly this: That  
 when they descended into the water and  
 arose out of it again, (which was the  
 ancient and most significant manner of  
 baptizing,) they made publick profession,  
 that as they hoped for pardon of their  
 past Sins through the merits of the Death  
 of Christ, so they themselves would  
 thenceforth die unto Sin, that is, utterly  
 and for ever cast off and forsake all their

former Debaucheries and unrighteous Practices whatsoever; and for the future rise again to walk with Christ, *in newness and holiness of life.* Those who did walk suitably to this holy profession, were said to be *Washed, to be Sanctified, to be Justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.* And they who so continued to live suitably to the End, were said to *Persevere.* And of such only, was it said that they *Persevered*; in opposition to those, who after their Baptism, lapsed into any great and notorious transgression. Hence in the book of the *Revelation*, according to the figurative manner of expression in prophetick writings, Baptized Persons are represented as having *washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.* And of such as Persevered from That time, our Saviour seems accordingly to speak, ch. iii. 4; *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.* Some indeed carried this Severity too far: But how can *we*, who live in these corrupter Ages of the world, and are fallen into the *contrary* extreme, how

S E R M. can *we* think upon these things, without  
 XVII. shame and confusion of faces; who, not  
 ~~~~~ only after having solemnly taken upon our-  
 selves the profession of Religion, but after
 frequent purposes and promises of refor-
 mation, after repeated vows and resolu-
 tions of amendment, do yet often conti-
 nue in Sin and defer our Repentance.
 'Tis true, there is no man who pretends
 to be a Christian, but designs to Repent
 at Some time or other; and our Saviour
has indeed in his Gospel made the same
 promises to Repentance, that he has to
 Innocence and continued Obedience. But
 let us not here deceive ourselves by a fun-
 damental Errour. The Repentance to
 which our Saviour has made such large
 promises, is not the *late* Repentance or
 ineffective Remorse of a dying *Christian*,
 but the *timely* Repentance of a Sinner at
 his conversion to Christianity; and gene-
 rally in the *New Testament* it means the
very same thing, as Baptism itself; which
 is therefore sometimes for that very rea-
 son stiled in Scripture the *Baptism of Re-*
pentance. Indeed if a Christian, by an
 unhappy education, be brought up in Ig-
 norance and Wickedness; whenever he

comes

comes by the power of God's Word, and S E R M.
the influence of his Holy Spirit, to be XVII.
convinced of the evil of his ways, and of
the necessity of Virtue and true Religion;
he is then in the same state that a Hea-
then Convert is supposed to be at his
Baptism, and the same Promises are made
to them both. But when a Christian, who
has a clear knowledge of his duty, does
notwithstanding *That*, continue wilfully
all his life in Sin and Debauchery; our
Saviour is so far from assuring him that
God and Angels will rejoice at his Con-
version if when he grows old he leaves
off Sinning (or rather seems to do so,) be-
cause he can Sin no more; that he has
no where promised that such a Repentance
shall with any certainty be accepted at *all*.
That which is absolutely required of us,
and which is the *least* that can possibly be
meant by Perseverance, is; that, if we
have not been so happy, as to have always
escaped the great corruptions of the
world, through the knowledge of our
Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; yet that at
least by a *timely* Repentance we so effect-
ually forsake them, as to return to them no
more, but continue for the future in the

S E R M. constant and habitual practice of the con-
 XVII. trary Virtues; Having always before our
 eyes those admonitions of the Apostles;
*Little children, let no man deceive you;
 He only that doth righteousness, is righte-
 ous; 1 Joh. iii. 7. And 1 Cor. vi. 9; Know
 ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit
 the kingdom of God? Be not deceived;
 neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adul-
 terers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drun-
 kards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall
 inherit the kingdom of God. And again,
 Gal. v. 19; The works of the flesh are ma-
 nifest, which are these; adultery, fornica-
 tion, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,
 witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations,
 wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings,
 murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such
 like; of the which I tell you before, as I
 have also told you in times past, that they
 which do such things, shall not inherit the
 kingdom of God.*

IT remains, that I draw only a brief
 Inference or two from what has been said,
 and so conclude. And

1st; THOSE who have been so happy
 as hitherto to have escaped the great Cor-
 ruptions of the world, let them consider
 what

what an unspeakable advantage they have S E R M.
in their hands, and let them be zealous XVII.
that no man take their crown. Let them
consider that *That* time, which a dying
Sinner would give all the world to reco-
ver, is now in their hands, and they may
make an inestimable use of it. Let them
consider, that if they patiently continue
to maintain their innocence and their good
works for a few years, they will soon be
past the greatest dangers of Temptation;
they will escape the bitter pangs of Re-
morse and Repentance; they will be ~~above~~
that greatest of humane miseries, the dread
and horror of death; and may, not only
without fear, but even with joy expect
the appearance of our Lord *at his second*
coming; who has promised, that *to him*
who thus overcometh, *he will give to eat*
of the tree of life, which is in the midst of
the paradise of God. Again; *He that o-*
vercometh, shall not be hurt of the second
death; ver. 11, of this chapter. *He that*
overcometh, and keepeth my works unto
the end, to him will I give power over the
nations, even as I received of my Father;
ver. 26. *He that overcometh, the same*
shall be clothed in white raiment, and I

SERMON. *will not blot his name out of the book of*
 XVII. *life, but I will confess his name before my*
Father, and before his Angels; ch. iii.
ver. 5. Him that overcometh, will I
make a pillar in the temple of my God,
and he shall go no more out, and I will
write upon him the name of my God, and
the name of the city of my God, which is
new Jerusalem; ver. 12. And, To him
that overcometh will I grant to sit with
me in my throne, even as I also overcame
and am sit down with my Father in his
throne; ver. 21.

2dly; THOSE who, on the other hand,
 have lived hitherto in a course of Wick-
 edness and Debauchery, and are still under
 the bondage and slavery of Sin; the only
 advice that can be given to them, is to
 warn them of their approaching danger,
 and to exhort them earnestly, to flee from
 the wrath to come. They are (in the ex-
 pression of St Jude) *as firebrands in the*
fire, ready to be consumed. They are un-
 der the sentence of the wrath of God,
 and liable to all the curses that are writ-
 ten in his book. They are upon the brink
 of eternal death, and ready to be swallow-
 ed up in endless destruction. Their pro-
 fessing

feffing the Name of Christ, will do them S E R M.
no service; their continuing in the com- XVII.
munion of his church, will avail them
nothing. There is but one remedy, which
is by a thorough Repentance to purify
themselves immediately *from all filthiness*
of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness
in the fear of God. Otherwise, without
such an actual and timely amendment,
there is no just ground to hope, that a
death-bed Sorrow shall be *accepted unto*
Salvation. The Penitent thief indeed
was received by our Saviour, as any other
Infidel and ignorant person may be, who
in the latter part of his life has the first
opportunity of being convinced of the
Truth of Christ's holy religion, and sin-
cerely embraces it, but I do not remem-
ber any place in Scripture, where 'tis pro-
mised that the vain Sorrow of a Christian,
who has spent all his life in Debauchery
and Unrighteousness, shall be accepted at
the hour of death. The labourers who
were hired into the vineyard at the ele-
venth hour, received indeed the same wa-
ges with them that had born the burden
and heat of the day: But our Saviour has
no where promised, that Christians who
have

SERM. have all along enjoyed the Light of the
 XVII. Gospel, and are hired into the vineyard
 in the morning, if *they* riot away all the
 day in Wickedness and Debauchery, shall
 at night be accepted for their professing
 their sorrow that they have not worked.
 Let All therefore, who have yet the time
 before them, consider what they have to
 do; let them be zealous to improve that
 time and those talents wherewith God has
 blessed them, that when their master cometh
 he may find them so doing, and bid
 them, as having been good and faithful
 servants, *to enter into the joy of their Lord.*

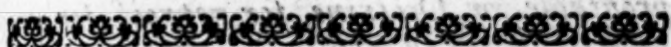
AND may the Grace of God, which is
 able to raise even the dead to life, enable
 them to finish this their great work, before
 the things that belong to their peace, be hid
 from their eyes.

SERMON



SERMON XVIII.

Different Degrees of Sinners differently to be treated.



JUDE 22, and part of 23.

And of some have Compassion, making a difference; And others save with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire.



HERE is nothing of greater difficulty in the Explication of Scripture, than the applying to Persons of different *Temper*s and *Dispositions*, of different *Capacities* and *Qualifications*, those *Portions* of Holy Writ, those *Divine Promises* or *Threatnings*, those *Comforts* or *Terrors* of the Lord, which *properly* belong to them, and are *fitly* suited to their peculiar Circumstances. There is nothing more difficult,

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SERM. difficult, than to hinder them from per-
 XVIII. verting their own *Understandings*, and mis-
 guiding their *Actions*, by applying to them-
 selves what does by no means belong to
 Them, or to any persons in their Circum-
 stances, but often to such as are in a quite
 contrary condition; and so *wresting the*
Scriptures, as St Peter expresses it, to
their own destruction. All Scripture is in-
 deed given by inspiration of God; and is
profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for cor-
rection, for instruction in Righteousness;
that the man of God may be perfect, tho-
roughly furnished unto all good Works: But
 in order to this effect, 'tis necessary that
 the *Word of Truth* be rightly divided, as
 St Paul directs, 2 Tim. ii. 15; i. e. that
 proper Application be made of the diffe-
 rent parts of it, according to the different
 Circumstances of different Persons. By one
 Method, the ignorant are to be instructed;
 by another the wicked and the profane, to
 be reproved: By one part of Scripture, the
 Weak are to be confirmed; by another, the
 Melancholy to be comforted; by a third,
 the Erroneous to be undeceived. There is
 one kind of Arguments necessary to be used,
 to men of evil Principles and debauched
 Lives;

differently to be treated.

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Lives; to Lovers of Pleasure, and Haters SEEM
of Discipline and wise Instruction; to XVIII.
men puffed up with accidental advantages
of this present World, and that have never
tasted the Powers of the World to come:
and another sort proper to be applied to
those, who know the Will of God, and ap-
prove the things that are more excellent,
and delight in the Law of God after the
inward man, being convinced that the
Law is Holy, and the Commandment Holy
and just and good; but thro' the Strength
of their Passions and the Weakness of their
Resolutions, they are frequently seduced
by the Deceitfulness of Sin, and find an-
other Law in their Members warring a-
gainst the Law of their Mind, and bring-
ing them into Captivity to the Law of Sin
and Death. There are some, that ought
to be rebuked sharply, Tit. i. 13; and o-
thers, whom when they are overtaken in a
Fault, they which are spiritual are direct-
ed to restore them in the Spirit of Mock-
ness, considering themselves lest they also
be tempted; Gal. vi. 1. One Man, our Savi-
our directs, that you should tell him of his
Fault between him and thee; and that an-
other you should look upon as a Hea-
then

SERM. *then man and a Publican; not to keep*
 XVIII. *company with such a man, no, not to eat.*

Some Persons the Apostle speaks of delivering over unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme; and for the destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus; In like manners, as desperate Diseases of the Body, use to have applied to them the sharpest and most dangerous remedies: Concerning others we are directed, not to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking Flax; not to count them as enemies, but to admonish them as brethren; to lift up the hands which hang down, and to strengthen the feeble knees,---- lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but that it rather be healed; Heb. xii. 13. There are Sins, of Weakness and daily incursion; surprises, negligences and inadvertencies; trespasses, which our Saviour encourages us to hope shall daily be forgiven, even as we daily offer up our prayers to God, and daily forgive each other our mutual trespasses: There are other Offences of such presumptuous Malignity, so totally destructive of the Christian Life, so entirely opposite to the whole Spirit of the Gospel,

2 Theff.
 iii. 15.

differently to be treated.

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XVIII.

pel, and carrying along with them so little hope of being ever amended; that the Apostle St *John* seems *hardly* to *dare* encourage us, to hope or pray for their forgiveness at all; And our Saviour, who knew what was in man, and how impossible it was for *some particular* persons, who rejected the Gospel with a high hand and with presumptuous contempt, to be ever brought to Repentance; declares peremptorily that *their Sin should not be forgiven them, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.* The Apostle St Paul, 1 Tim. v. 24, 25; thus distinguishes the different kinds of Sinners; *Some mens Sins, says he, are open before-hand, going before to judgment, and others they follow after: Likewise also the good Works of some, are manifest before-hand; and they that are otherwise, cannot be hid: Some mens Sins are open before-hand; i. e. as he elsewhere expresses it, The Works of the Flesh are manifest; they are notorious even to the Eye of the World; they are such as cannot be concealed, but may without Scruple be condemned before-hand, going before unto judgment with a visible and indisputable Sentence of Condemnation:*

S E R M. demnation: *And others they follow after;*

XVIII. i. e. the Sins of *others*, are secret at present
 and undiscovered to the World; but will
 appear against them in judgment, at the
 Day when the Thoughts of all Hearts
 shall be disclosed. *Likewise also the good
 Works of some, are manifest before-hand;
 and they that are otherwise, cannot be hid;
 they that are otherwise, i. e. those good
 Works that Now are not manifest, yet shall
 not always be hid. Most Expositors un-
 derstand this latter verse otherwise, as if
 the Apostle had said; The good Works of
 some, are manifest before-hand; and they
 that are otherwise, i. e. those Works that
 are not good, likewise cannot be hid. But
 this being a repetition of the very same
 thing that was expressed in the fore-going
 verse; the Antithesis or Opposition be-
 tween the two Parts of the Sentence, is
 much better preserved in that Explication I
 now mentioned: Some mens Sins are open
 before-hand, going before unto judgment, and
 others they follow after; Likewise also the
 good Works of some, are manifest before-
 hand; and those that are otherwise, those
 good Works that Now are not manifest,
 yet shall not always be hid. But to pro-
 ceed:*

ceed: There are Persons, whose Hearts are S E R M.
as hard as the nether Milstone; whose Con- XVIII.
sciences are insensible, and, in the Apostle's
phrase, *seared as it were with a hot Iron*;
on whom the Terrors of the Lord make no
impression, no, not when represented un-
der the affrighting similitude, of the *Moun-*
tain that burned with Fire, and of the
Blackness and Darknes and Tempest; Heb.
xii. 18: Of which sort of men, there is a
most elegant description, in Rev. xvi.
9; *And men were scorched with great*
Heat, and blasphemed the Name of God
which has power over these plagues, and
repented not to give him glory; but gnawed
their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the
God of Heaven because of their pains, and
yet repented not of their deeds: This is a
lively description indeed, of hardened Sin-
ners: There are Others, whose Hearts are
tender and melancholy; apprehensive, be-
yond measure and without reason; discon-
solate, and apt to fear even where no fear is.
Some, with great Presumption, and with-
out any just ground, apply to themselves
all the Promises made in Scripture to the
Best of Men, or even to the *universal*
Church itself; and Others as unreasonably,

S E R M. without being conscious of any great
 XVIII. Wickedness, yet in a desponding manner
 take to themselves all the Threatnings denounced in Scripture against the *greatest* of Sinners, against even the *Haters* and *Despisers* of all Religion. Among this Multitude and Variety of different and even contrary Tempers and Dispositions of Men; *rightly to divide the Word of Truth*; and *so* to set forth the infinite Mercy and Goodness of God declared in the Gospel towards repenting Sinners, as that the confident and presumptuous may not thence be able to take any occasion of being negligent in *working out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; and at the same time *so* to represent the severity of the divine Threatnings against Sin, that melancholy pious Persons may not thereby be driven into unreasonable Despondency; this is a matter of very great Difficulty, and *who is sufficient for these things*? There can be no better Direction given us in this Matter, than what we find in the Words of the Text: *Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire*; i. e. according to the different Tempers and

Cir-

Circumstances of Men, according to the S E R M.
different degrees of their Sin and Danger; XVIII.
so let them either be *invited* with Tender-
ness and Compassion, or *terrified* with the
severity of the divine Vengeance, into the
Practice of their Duty. For so God Al-
mighty himself in the dispensations of his
All-wise Providence, *draws* some men
with the tender Mercies of a compassi-
onate Father, and others he *drives* with
the Terrors of an incensed Judge.

IN the Words, we cannot but observe;
1st, that there is great *Difference* in the
degrees of Sin, and in the *Danger* of Sin-
ners; and that accordingly there ought to
be a proportionable difference, in the
manner of treating them: *Making a Dif-*
ference. 2^{dly}, That the Difference which
ought to be made in this case, is This;
that those who sin thro' *infirmity*, are to
be admonished with greater tenderness
and gentleness, than those who sin pre-
sumptuously: *Of some, have Compassion.*
3^{dly}, That wilful and presumptuous Sin-
ners, Sinners who transgress *habitually* and
with a high hand, are to be looked upon
as being in a condition near to desperate,
as being *already in the Fire*, out of which

SERM. there is great Reason to *Fear* lest perhaps
 XVIII. they cannot be *pulled out* soon enough, be-
 fore they be consumed: *Others save with*
Fear, pulling them out of the Fire. atbly
 and lastly, that even *these* Persons we ought
 still to endeavour to save, by bringing
 them even yet, if possible, to Repentance;
Save them, tho' with Fear; save them,
tho' it be out of the Fire. The Rescue of
 such Persons out of their extreme danger,
St Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 15, elegantly de-
 scribes by the like similitude; represent-
 ing them as being *saved, yet so as by or*
from Fire; so as out of or thro' the Flames:
 in such manner as a Person escapes or is
 delivered out of the Burning, when his
 House is on all sides on Fire round about
 him. Those of the Church of Rome, have
 from that passage ridiculously attempted
 to deduce the Doctrine of *Purgatory*; But
 the plain meaning of *St Paul* is, to express
 the great Danger of those, who, upon the
 Foundation of Christ, build *vain and un-*
necessary Doctrines of their own. And *St*
Jude in the Text borrows the same Phrase,
 to signify the extreme Difficulty of redu-
 cing such Persons into a State of Salvation,
 who, upon the same Foundation, disho-
 nour

differently to be treated.

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nour their Profession by *a vicious course* SERM. XVIII.
of Life. And indeed, if there be *any* difference, the Phrase is even *more* emphatically applicable to the Persons St Jude speaks of than to those mentioned by St Paul. For if he who upon the Foundation of Christ, builds the *hay and stubble* of unnecessary *doctrines*, shall himself with difficulty be saved when his Work is on Fire; how much less shall *He* escape, who by a vicious *Life* on the same Foundation builds up *Pitch and Brimstone*, as a treasure against the day when the Wrath of God shall be revealed by Fire?

THE Words being thus explained, and clearly distinguishing Sinners into *two* Sorts; such as are to be treated with all *Compassion*, and others that are to be reprov'd with the utmost *Severity*: we may reasonably conclude that the *First* sort, the persons to be treated with all *Gentleness and Compassion*, are such as sin for *want of knowledge and due consideration*; such of whom our Saviour affirms that they *shall be beaten with few stripes*; and whom *We* therefore ought to instruct in meekness, and reprove with all possible *Tenderness*: *Beginners in Sin*; as Persons not yet of

E c 3

ripe

SERM. ripe years; seduced into the borders of
 XVIII. Unrighteousness, thro' Simplicity, and
 without Malicious intention; Sinners by
 ill Example, and thro' the *Prejudices* of
 the first Principles of an *ill education*;
 Sinners in *single* instances, and matters of
smaller importance; in cases of sudden
surprise, and with *unfrequent* returns:
 These are the persons to be treated with
 the gentle admonitions of compassion.
 Under the *Second* sort; those that are to
 be reprov'd with the utmost *Severity*; we
 may conceive the Apostle designed to com-
 prehend, such as are guilty of particular
great and crying Transgressions; as *Simon*
Magus, whom we find *St Peter* thus re-
 proving; *Repent of thy Wickedness, and*
pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine
Heart may be forgiven thee; Also all habi-
 tual Sinners in *any* kind; whom the Scrip-
 ture always represents as extremely diffi-
 cult to be recovered; And above all, *Mock-*
ers and Scorners at Religion; whose case is
 always spoken of in the Holy Writ, as
 little less than desperate.

BUT, to make a still *more particular* ap-
 plication to the different Kinds and Degrees
 of Sinners hinted at in the Text, we may
 distinguish as follows. *First*;

First; SOME men there are, who SERM.
XVIII.
for want of early instruction and good education, are so utterly ignorant of all religious matters, that, excepting the bare Name, they hardly know whether there *be* any such thing as Religion at all: They are wholly ignorant of the great Motives and Principles of Religion; and, for want of attending with due consideration to the dictates of natural conscience, they have very little sense of the eternal and fundamental obligation of the moral and immutable reason of things. Such persons as these, want the very foundation and first *principles* of the Doctrine of Christ, to be laid for them from the beginning: And their want of education can be supplied only, by the repetition of wise and wholesome instruction. The Doctrines of Religion must be instilled into these persons by degrees, and inculcated upon them with continual industry. Precept must be given upon precept, and line upon line. Prejudices must be removed, false apprehensions rectified, the danger of wilful ignorance and carelessness in the great matters of Religion affectionately discovered. The Motives of Religion must be

SERM. strongly enforced, the exceeding great re-
XVIII. wards of virtue clearly and distinctly re-
presented, and the Terrours of the Lord earnestly urged and pressed upon them.

Secondly; OTHERS there are, who, not like the former, out of mere ignorance and stupidity, but on the contrary, through an affectation of wit and gallantry, deny all moral difference of Actions, and take upon them by an extraordinary degree of reason and judgment to have gotten *above* the Fears and Obligations of Religion. These are the men of the most openly corrupt Principles, and debauched Lives; Lovers of Pleasure, and Haters of all serious and wise instruction; puffed up with accidental Advantages of this present World; despisers of true Knowledge, and that cannot bear Reproof. To such persons as these, whenever they can be prevailed with to hearken to That Reason which they would be thought to be masters of, we must demonstrate from the necessary notion of a first or self-existent Cause, and from the structure and order of the world, that there *is* a Supreme God, who made and governs all things; and from the necessary Attributes of such a supreme and self-existent Cause, we must
prove

prove that God, as he is all-powerful and S E R M.
All-wise, so he is also perfectly Holy, Just XVIII.
and Good; and from the Consideration of
these attributes compared with the nature
of things and the relation of Creatures,
we must show them the obligations and
the reasonableness of Religion. But if
they are not disposed to hearken to these
convictions; then it must be made appear,
that their irreligion proceeds not at all,
as they pretend, from reason and under-
standing, but is *merely* an effect of con-
ceited and affected vanity, of keeping
corrupt and foolish company, and of their
loose and vicious lives. And in *That* case,
we must first endeavour *in general*, to
bring them to a serious *consideration*, and
to a sober temper and disposition of
Mind; Which if once they can in *any*
degree be brought to, they will soon see
and be perswaded, that God did not create
this World, merely for Them to live fool-
ishly and wickedly in for a few years, de-
spising and affronting their Maker; and
then to return again eternally into No-
thing, as if they had never been.

Thirdly; OTHERS we shall find, who
will profess to believe the Being of God,
and

S E R M. and the natural Obligations of Religion;
XVIII. yet will deny the truth of all divine Revelation, and have no regard to the Authority of the *Gospel*, which is the Religion appointed for the reconciliation of *Sinners*. To such persons as these, we must endeavour to show the necessary difference, between the natural duty of *innocent* creatures, and a religion instituted for the Salvation of *Sinners*. That tho' it be indeed true, that God is appeasable in his own nature, and that this may in some measure be collected even by the light of reason; yet that *Sinners* cannot have That confidence and assurance, which innocent persons might have had; and that God may dispense his mercy to them in what manner, and upon what conditions he himself shall be pleased to institute. He may have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he himself, who is the alone unerring Judge, sees fit to have compassion. That therefore *in general* it was agreeable to reason, to expect a revelation of the *manner* of God's dispensing his mercy to *Sinners*; and that in *particular*, the *Christian* Religion (as taught by Christ and his Apostles in its original

original Simplicity) has both in its own S E R M.
nature all the *internal* evidence of its be- XVIII.
ing *such* a revelation, and also all the *out-*
ward proofs of its being true and divine,
that was reasonable either for God to give,
or Man expect. If the deniers of revela-
tion have any of that true and impar-
tial reason, by which they pretend to judge
of things, they will hardly fail of being
convinced by these considerations. But
if they will not hearken to such argu-
ments, 'tis then but too evident, that they
are not (as they would be thought to be,)
Lovers of Natural Religion and true Rea-
son, but that they only endeavour to hide
Atheism and Irreligion under the speci-
ous pretence of opposing Superstition;
And This is generally manifest by their
vicious Lives; which will always give the
lie to hypocrisy; and is an infallible de-
monstration either of evil principles, or
of none at all.

Fourthly; AMONG those who have
gone still further than the former; and
acknowledge, not only the Religion of
Nature, but also the Gospel of *Christ*;
yet how *many* are there, who have cor-
rupted this Doctrine of Truth and Sim-
plicity

SER M. plicity with numberless Vanities and Superstitions? How have some filled the Church of God with Pageantry and empty Show, and turned the pure worship of God into idolatrous rites, not inferiour in folly even to those of the meanest and most ignorant Heathens? and how have others sometimes in a contrary Extreme made Religion seem vile and contemptible, by setting themselves unreasonably against *All* Matters of decent form, and comely regularity? Should I here but hint at the chief of those strange imaginations, and extravagant Doctrines, and the innumerable corruptions of great and useful Truths, which men of unstable Principles have invented or been seduced into; it might seem to be an *endless* as well as an ungrateful labour. And yet against *every one* of these, are fit and proper remedies to be applied (out of Scripture,) and opposed at one and the same time, to errors of all kinds, and in all contrary extremes; contrary not only to truth, but, (as is the nature of falsehoods,) to each other also.

Fifthly, FURTHER yet; even among those who maintain the *Truth* in Speculation,

lation, and contend for *no* errors in doctrine; many there are nevertheless, who in a negligent and careless way, turning away their Thoughts from the Principles they have been instructed in, and being hurried away with the Temptations of a debauched World, are notoriously wicked in *Practice*; and the Truth which they hold, is in the most shameful *unrighteousness*. And these; having already broke through all the acknowledged obligations, not only of *natural* Duty and Conscience, but even of revealed religion also; having despised and rejected all the promises and threatnings of the Gospel; having been once in vain enlightened, and having experimented the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Spirit; having tasted the good word of God, and the Powers of the world to come; and yet after all this, having relapsed into a vicious and debauched course of life, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an Unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of Grace: Such persons as *These*, I say, have in a manner *precluded* and rendred *ineffectual*

S E R M.
XVIII.

S E R M. *fectual* to themselves all the usual means
 XVIII. of reformation; they have *prevented* all
 ~~~~~ the arguments of instruction, and made  
 void to themselves before-hand all the  
 motives of Religion. The only way of  
 applying therefore to *This* sort of persons,  
 is to endeavour to *awaken* their stupefied  
 and seared consciences, by representing to  
 them the *Threatnings* of the Lord, under  
 the just Circumstances of their true and  
 real Terrours; and to paint out before  
 them in the most proper and affecting co-  
 lours, the insupportable vengeance and  
 final wrath of God revealed from heaven,  
 against all impenitent and incorrigible Sin-  
 ners; if perhaps by this means it may  
 please God to open their eyes, and give  
 them repentance, to the *Practice*, as well  
 as the *acknowledgment* of the Truth.

*Lastly*; O T H E R S there are on the con-  
 trary, who not only believe rightly, but  
 also live well, in the Practice of all Ho-  
 linefs, Righteousness and Charity; and  
 yet through indisposition of Body, and  
 melancholy imaginations of mind, they  
 are always disconsolate and fearful of their  
 own estate; distrustful of the Mercy of  
 God,

*differently to be treated.*

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God, and full of endless scruples and unreasonable fears, ill-grounded suspicions and vain anxieties of mind. These must be treated in a quite contrary method to the former; with all possible Gentleness, Tenderneſs and Compaſſion. To theſe we muſt endeavour to give true notions of the nature of God, and of his threats and promiſes; of his mercy and juſtice, and of his gracious diſpenſations to Mankind: That when God is repreſented in Scripture as hating and abominating wicked men, this is by no means to be underſtood of the weakneſſes and infirmities of ſincere perſons, but of the impieties of ſuch as ſin preſumptuouſly and with a high hand: That the different degrees of affections with which men ſerve God, does frequently depend more on their conſtitution of body, than on their temper of mind: That evil and dreadful Thoughts, of which ſuch perſons, as I am now ſpeaking of, are apt to complain; do for the moſt part proceed from bodily indispoſition, and are not properly Sins: That thoſe who make the greateſt complaints of this kind, are generally very good and ſincere,

S E R M.

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SERMON. cere, though weak persons; and not guilty of great and deliberate Crimes. With *many* other the *like* observations, suitable to such cases as these; which neither the *Time*, nor the Variety of the *Cases* themselves, nor the infinite Diversity of Circumstances of the *Persons* concerned, make possible for us, to *apply in particular*.

THAT, which remains therefore, after having given this brief Account of the many different Sorts and Degrees of Sinners; is only to exhort *All* Persons, (since the Scriptures *must* be read and considered by *All*, and the Gospel *must* be preached in general to persons of *all* Capacities and Dispositions whatever;) I say, That which remains is, to exhort, that *every one* would seriously and sincerely endeavour to apply to *himself those things only*, which upon due consideration, and impartial examining of his own Conscience, appear to be truly and properly applicable to him; that so neither the presumptuous may be made confident by God's promises of *Mercy*, which belong not to *Them*; nor the Melancholy be driven to despair by the severity of his *Threatnings*; but that every one

*differently to be treated.*

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one may find food suitable to his particular condition, and, being made wise unto Salvation, may grow up into a perfect man, unto the measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.

S. E. R. M.  
XVIII.



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and they had food for the winter. In condition, and being ready to go, they went on their journey. They went to the north of the State of New York, and they found the people of the State of New York.

They found the people of the State of New York, and they found the people of the State of New York. They found the people of the State of New York, and they found the people of the State of New York. They found the people of the State of New York, and they found the people of the State of New York.



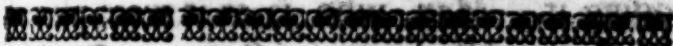
They found the people of the State of New York, and they found the people of the State of New York. They found the people of the State of New York, and they found the people of the State of New York. They found the people of the State of New York, and they found the people of the State of New York.

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# SERMON XIX.

Of the Duty of Prayer.



R o m. xii. latter part of verse 12.

*Continuing instant in Prayer.*



THE *Worship* of God, as 'tis SERM.  
 in the *Law* the first and XIX.  
 Great Commandment, the  
 principal Foundation and  
 Support of all Religion; so  
 'tis likewise *in itself* a most reasonable  
 Service, most *fit* and *becoming* the State  
 and Condition of Mankind. Creatures  
*inferiour* to Men, *must* obey the Will of  
 God by the *Necessity* of their *Nature*,  
*without* any *Choice* of the *Will*; and are  
 therefore incapable of paying properly  
 Vol. IX. F f 2 any

SERM. any *Worship* to God, though they glorify him continually by affording *Matter for his Praise*. Creatures *superiour* to Men, do on the contrary by so *perfect* a Choice of the Will, continually worship God with an entire and uninterrupted Service; that they are probably very little more in danger of *choosing* to oppose themselves to the Will of God, than the inferiour Creation is in any *possibility* of doing it. *Man*, who is as it were placed in the *middle* between Creatures Earthly and Heavenly, is indued with *Faculties* which enable him clearly to understand the Obligation lying upon him to obey constantly the Will of God; and yet at the same time is encompassed with such Weaknesses, as make him stand in need of perpetual Assistance, to enable him to live up in any tolerable Measure to the Obligations he is under. Upon This, is founded principally the Duty of *Prayer*; which is upon *Earth* the Primary and the Greatest part of Divine Worship, as *Thanksgiving* is the Chief and Larger part of the same Worship in *Heaven*. *Obedience itself*, or the Practice of Virtue and

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*Of the Duty of Prayer.*

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Righteousness, in imitation of God, and S Y M.  
in compliance with his Commands, XIX.  
is indeed still more *excellent* than either of  
these: being, in the Sight of God, as  
much more *valuable* than either *Prayer*  
or *Thanksgiving*; as the Duty of *Charity*  
or Universal Good-Will to Mankind, is,  
in St Paul's Estimation, to be preferred  
before the Virtues of *Faith* or *Hope*. Be-  
hold, *to Obey is better than sacrifice, and*  
*to hearken than the Fat of Rams*: The  
Meaning is, that a Virtuous and Good  
Life, is better not only than *Jewish* Rites  
and Ceremonies, but better even than the  
Best of any Other Worship, that is paid  
to God either on Earth or in Heaven.  
Nevertheless, as the One ought above all  
things to be *Done*, so the Other ought  
not by any means to be left *Undone*. As  
God is to be *Obeded*, so he is to be *Wor-*  
*shipped* also: Nay, the Worshipping him  
is a Part of that very Obedience, and a  
Means to enable men to perform more  
acceptably the Other parts of their Obe-  
dience to him. 'Tis in itself a fit and  
most *reasonable* Service, that we who  
*know* we receive all *from* him, should



SER M. acknowledge that we do so, by Asking of  
 XIX. him. 'Tis a high Privilege, that we are  
 permitted to approach the Father of all  
 things, and have access to the Throne of  
 Supreme Glory. 'Tis, in the natural con-  
 sequence of the thing itself, a Means of  
 promoting the Practice of Virtue, by  
 putting the Mind habitually into good  
 Temper and Frame: And 'tis moreover,  
 by the Appointment of God, a Condition  
 requisite in order to obtain His Blessing  
 upon our Endeavours; because he has  
 promised, that he will be nigh unto all  
 them that call upon him, *yea, unto all*  
*them that call upon him faithfully*; that he  
 will fulfill the Desire of them that fear  
 him, that he will also hear their Cry and  
 will help them; Ps. cxlv. 18: Which Pro-  
 mise, our Saviour confirms by a most af-  
 fectionate Comparison, when he argues  
 from the Love of a Father towards his  
 Children, how much more ready God is  
 to assist those who worthily apply to  
 him: Ask, saith he, and it shall be given  
 you; seek, and ye shall find: — If a Son  
 shall ask Bread of any of You that is a  
 Father, will he give him a Stone? or if

he ask a Fish, will he for a Fish give him a Serpent? or if he shall ask an Egg, will he offer him a Scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Children; how much more shall your heavenly Father, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Luke xi. 9.

THE Reasonableness and Necessity of the Duty of Prayer in general, being thus apparent both in Scripture and in the Nature of the thing itself; I shall, in the following Discourse, for our more particular Instruction in so important a Duty of Religion, consider distinctly, 1<sup>st</sup>, The Object of Prayer, or the Person to whom it is to be directed; 2<sup>dly</sup>, The Things proper to be prayed for; and 3<sup>dly</sup>, The Circumstances or Qualifications necessary, to make the Person who prays, and the Petitions which he puts up, acceptable before God.

I. First; THE Object of Prayer, or the Person to whom Prayers are to be directed, is God. Pl. lxxv. 1; Unto Thee, O God, shall the Vow be performed; Thou that bearest the Prayer, unto Thee shall all Flesh come. This, is the obvious Voice

SERMON. of Nature; that Application should be  
 XIX. made by all Creatures, for a continual  
 ~~~~~ Supply of all their wants, to the supreme  
 Father and Governour of All, who is
Above all, and through all, and in all;
 or, as the Scripture in another place
 with no less elegancy expresses it, *Of*
whom and through whom and to whom are
all things. This is the First and Great
 Commandment, in *Nature* as well as in
Revelation. And 'tis very observable, as
 St Paul at large demonstrates in the 1st
 chapter to the *Romans*, that in propor-
 tion as the Heathen World departed from
 this original and natural Worship of the
 Maker of all things, to the feigning for
 themselves a Multitude of Gods, so did
 the corruption of their *Manners* likewise
 increase in all Other instances of Immo-
 rality, 'till they were given over to a re-
 probate mind, to work all Unrighteous-
 ness with Greediness. The Foundation of
 Prayer is laid, in the *Attributes* of God;
 and every *Perfection* of his Nature, af-
 fords a distinct Ground or Reason for our
 applying ourselves in this manner to him.
 His *Omnipresence* teaches us, that he is
 ever

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ever Near; His Omniscience, that he always knows our Petitions; His Omnipotence, that he is Able to grant them; His Goodness, that he is Willing to give us whatever is for our Real Benefit and Advantage; His Truth, that he will not fail to perform all his gracious Promises; and his Mercy, that he will not reject even Sinners when truly penitent, but will bear and forgive them upon their sincere Humiliation and Amendment. Thus All the Attributes of God, afford so many several Reasons, and distinct Motives or Arguments, to encourage us in the Duty of Prayer to him. Nor can it here reasonably be objected, that God, by reason of his Omniscience, knows already what we want, before we ask for it; and, by reason of his Goodness, will do what is fit, whether we ask for it or no; and that therefore the putting up of Prayers to him, is needless. This (I say) is no just Objection. For, as to the first part of the Difficulty, his knowing already what we want, before we ask for it; the Answer is evident; that the design of our putting up Petitions to him, is not for His

S E R M. His *Information*, but for a Testimony of

XIX. Our *Acknowledgment* of our dependance upon him. We do not ask of God, in order to *acquaint* Him, what things we stand in need of; but to express the Sense *we ourselves* have, of his being alone able to supply our Wants, and of his being the only Author of every good Gift. And then, as to the *second* part of the Objection; viz. our being sure that His Goodness will always move him to do *what is in itself fit*, whether we ask it or no; the Answer is no less plain; that That very *Fitness* of things, which is considered in the present case, arises in great measure from the Qualification of the *Persons*; And one principal Qualification, which makes any person *fit* to receive Blessings from God, is That Disposition of Mind, from whence proceedeth *Prayer* out of a *pure Heart*, and with *Lips unfeigned*. God therefore will indeed always do what is *fit*, whether men ask it of him or no; But This is no reason to neglect his Worship; Because, if men refuse to pay him this just and small Tribute, it will *upon That very account*

account become a thing fit and reasonable SERM.
in itself, that they should fall short of XIX.
the divine Blessings. Every Attribute of
God therefore, is a just Ground and Reason of Prayer to him; and a sufficient Argument also, why Prayer should be offered unto *Him alone*. To pray to inferior Beings, to Angels or to departed Saints; as has long been the Practice of the Church of Rome; is evidently *needless*; because God, we are sure, is always near, being himself every where present. 'Tis moreover *Presumption* and great *Vanity*; an *intruding into things which men have not seen*, being vainly puffed up by their *fleshly mind*, and taking upon themselves to be *wise above what is written*: For they do not so much as *pretend*, that praying to Saints and Angels is any where commanded. *Lastly*, it does plainly *derogate from the Honour of God*; because it *distracts mens Devotions*, and *divides that affection and reliance of mind*, which ought to be placed upon God alone. If it be alledged, that frail and sinful men, cannot of *themselves* acceptably approach the Supreme Throne of God; we have,
by

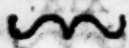
SERMON XIX. by divine Appointment, a sufficient Mediatour and *Advocate with the Father*, *Jesus Christ the Righteous*; who sitteth continually on the right hand of God, as our great High-Priest and Intercessor, to mediate for us, and to offer up our Prayers unto the *Father*. Through him alone, we all have an Access, as St Paul expressees it, by *One Spirit unto the Father*; Eph. ii. 18. And our Lord's own direction is, *Joh. xv. 16; Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* And; *when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven:* And again; *The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth.* This therefore is the direction the Scripture gives us, concerning the *Object* of Prayer; that Prayer is to be directed to God, thro' Christ. And as praying to false Gods, derogates from the Honour of the One True God; so praying by or thro' the intercession of false and fictitious Mediators, derogates in like manner from the Honour of Christ, the Only true Mediator. For as *there is One God*, so there is also, faith

saith the Apostle, *One Mediatour between God and Men*; And they who hold not *this Head*, (speaking of Angel-worshippers, Col. ii. 18, who join *Other Mediators* with Him whom Alone God has appointed to That Office,) they beguile themselves (says he) *of their reward*. Errours of *This* sort, have been the general Sin of Mankind in all Ages; and 'tis very unaccountable, how greedily even *Christians*, after the clearest revelation of the Will of God, have run into the same Mistake. This therefore may suffice concerning the 1st Head, namely the *Object* of Prayer, or the Person to whom Prayers are to be directed.

II. *Secondly*; I PROPOSED to consider in the next place, the *Things* that are proper to be *prayed for*. And here, there cannot be given any particular Directions, which will exactly suit the Circumstances of different Persons. Every one, best understands his own Wants and Necessities; and if his Prayers be not mere *Forms*, he will in his own Heart naturally adjust them to his own Circumstances; And, for exactness or propriety of *Expression*,

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pression, to *This* God has no regard. All the Advice that can be given, is, in general, that men consider, according to the best of their abilities, what is suitable to the Nature of God to give, and proper for *Them* to ask. We are to pray, for every thing that is good, and *against* every thing that is evil; for *ourselves*, and for *others*; for *all* Mankind, even for those that are our *Enemies*; that God would convert them, and bring them finally to Salvation. We are to pray, for the forgiveness of *past* Sins; and that we may be preserved from such, as we might fall into *for the future*. In a word; for a competent measure, of all the good things of the *present* life; and, above *all* things, that we fall not short of the Happiness of *that to come*. The Method our Saviour has laid down in the Form of his own composing, is the best Direction in This case. He teaches us to pray in the *first* place, that the Honour and *Kingdom* of God may be advanced among men, by the Practice of Virtue and by our *Obedience to his Will*: According to the Direction he elsewhere gives, that we should

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should first seek the Kingdom of God and SERMON
his Righteousness, and that then all other XIX.
things should be added unto us. For want
of observing which direction, St James
declares to some in His time, Jam. iv. 3;
Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask a-
miss, that ye may consume it upon your
Lusts. That which to every good man,
cannot but be first and principal in the
Desire of his Heart; (namely the im-
provement of himself and Others in true
Religion;) ought also to be, and natu-
rally will be, the Primary Subject of his
Prayers. Some devout persons, have in
this matter run into the contrary Ex-
treme; and, because we are indeed weak
and dependent creatures, and can do no-
thing without the divine Assistance; there-
fore they have supposed and taught, that
men can do nothing at all for themselves
as to any religious improvement, but must
rely wholly upon God to do every thing
for them and in them: Not considering,
that spiritual *Abilities* are derived from
God and depend on him, just in the same
manner as all natural *Powers and Facul-*
ties do; In which 'tis evident God does
not

S E R M. not act for us, but gives us Power to act
 XIX. for ourselves; And therefore in *spiritual*
 matters likewise, God so gives us to will
 and to do, as that by his giving us those
 Powers, we are obliged therewith to work
 out our own Salvation. For a continual
 Supply therefore of these Powers, and for
 the Assistance of the divine Spirit in the
 Use of them, we are bound to pray; and
 we cannot innocently want them, because
 God has promised that he will give his
 Holy Spirit, to them that sincerely ask
 him.

N E X T, after these *Spiritual* Blessings,
 our Saviour directs us to pray for our
daily bread; for the necessities and con-
 veniencies of this *temporal* Life: To show
 us, that his Religion does not teach men
 to neglect the World wholly, and to be
 useless in it; but only not to abuse it by
 Sensuality and Debauchery.

A N D because we are subject to daily
 infirmities, he teaches us in the next
 place to pray daily for the *forgiveness*
of our Sins: In which part of our pe-
 titions, sincere minds ought to take care,
 that we pray not in mere Form, for the
 for.

forgiveness of Sins equally, which we *have* or *have not* committed; but that we really desire to *amend* those Faults, which we particularly pray to have forgiven.

Lastly, BECAUSE no man knows his own Strength for the future, our Lord directs us to pray that we may escape great Temptations, and that we fall not under the Power of the Evil One.

THESE are the best directions that can be given, concerning the *Matter* or *Things to be prayed for*. Which directions being of Necessity no other than general, are and must be left to be diversified in particular, according to every man's own Sense of his private and personal Wants.

III. *Thirdly*; THE *third* and *last* thing I proposed, was to consider the *Circumstances* or *Qualifications necessary*, to make the Person who prays, and the Petitions which he puts up, acceptable before God. And

1st; ALL Prayer, must be accompanied with *Attention of Mind*. This our Saviour expresses by that variation of

SERM. phrase, *Matt. vii. 7. Ask; and it shall be*
 XIX. *given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock,*
 and it shall be opened unto you. Where
 the Heart and Mind goes not along with
 the Mouth, Prayer is but an empty Form;
 and the expression of the Prophet may
 justly be applied, *This people draws near*
me with their lips, but their Heart is far
from me. Such persons have no reason,
 and indeed seem not much to expect, that
 their Prayers should be heard: But the ef-
 fectual fervent prayer of a righteous man,
 availeth much; *Jam. v. 16.*

2dly; PRAYERS must be put up with
 constancy, importunity and Perseverance.
 Pray, says the Apostle, *without ceasing;*
1 Th. v. 17. And our Saviour spake two
 Parables; one concerning a man perswa-
 ded by his Friend's importunity, to rise in
 the night, and lend him what he wanted;
 and the Other concerning an unjust
 Judge, prevailed upon by the importu-
 nity of a poor Widow to do her justice;
 These two Parables, says the Evangelist,
 spake Jesus, *to the end that men ought*
always to pray, and not to faint; *Luk. xviii.*
1; and xi. 5. The meaning is; not that
 men

Of the Duty of Prayer.

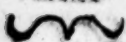
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men are to spend their *whole time* in pray-
ers; which is the Monkish Superstition:
or that Enthusiasts who pride themselves
in the *length* of their Prayers, shall be
heard the better for their *much speaking*:
but that 'tis needful for men, by *constant*
and *periodical* Returns of Prayer, to keep
up in their minds a *continual* Sense of
God, and of their Dependence upon him.

3dly; PRAYER, must always be with
Submission to the Will of God. Our
Judgments, are very weak and fallible;
and we often know not, what will hurt
or profit us. The things therefore which
we must earnestly desire, and which we
may very lawfully pray for; yet ought
always to be submitted, to the infinite
Wisdom and good pleasure of God. *We*
know not, saith St Paul, *what we should*
pray for as we ought, Rom. viii. 26; and,
Ye know not what ye ask, said our Lord
to two of his Apostles, Matt. xx. 22. And
he himself has set us an Example beyond
all exception, Luk. xxii. 42; *Father, if*
thou be willing, remove this Cup from me;
nevertheless, not My Will, but Thine be
done.

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4thly; PRAYERS must be put up, with steady Faith towards God. *Yam. i. 6; But let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering. And Mar. xi. 24; What things soever, says our Saviour, ye desire when ye pray; believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* It must be observed, that this remarkable promise, is made expressly concerning the Gift of *Miracles*, concerning removing a *Mountain*, and casting it into the *Sea*; as it is in the verse before: and must not be applied to any other persons or things, but where that singular Gift was expressly promised. In other cases, and times, the Faith towards God, which is requisite in Prayer, must be understood in proportion; to be, not a vain enthusiastical presumption, of being sure to obtain whatever we desire; (of which no Promise was ever made us;) but a rational Perswasion and firm Belief, that God is *Able* to perform whatever he wills, and *Willing* to do for us whatever is really fit and reasonable. The Greatest Objection, that vain men have ever made in This case against the Faith I am speaking of, is, that things seem regularly

to proceed in the course of *Nature*, and S E R M.
 according to the efficiency of *second Causes*; XIX.
 and that therefore, *What is the Almighty,*
that we should serve him? and what Pro-
fit should we have, if we pray unto him?
 Job xxi. 15. But the Answer is plain,
 that *Second Causes* are nothing more, than
Instruments in the hand of the *First*
Cause. For though men are apt to ima-
 gine, that those things only, which are
miraculous, do immediately evidence the
 Power of God; yet, in reality, the
 things which we call *natural*, do perfectly
 evidence the same Power. Only, what
 the Power of God does constantly and
 regularly, we are too apt to forget pro-
 ceeds from That Power; and we ascribe
 it to *Nature*, which is Nothing at all,
 but a mere empty Word. For as if from
 the constant and regular continuance of
 the *day-light*, men should cease to observe
 that there is such a thing as the *Sun* in
 the Heavens, from whence That *Light*
 proceeds; so it is equally absurd to ima-
 gine, that the Effects of *Nature* (as we
 call them) could regularly go on, with-
 out the Being and Providence of God, who
 is

SERM. is indeed the Alone Cause of those Effects. No man, enquiring after the *Architect* of a most perfect Building, would take it for a satisfactory Answer, to be told that 'twas *natural* for the Fabrick to be built in That Form. Yet the case is exactly the same, when men contentedly exclude consideration of God, merely by styling his Workmanship the Effects of *Nature*.

5thly; As acceptable Prayers must be put up with *steddy Faith* towards God, so must they also with *Charity and Forgiveness* towards Men. For He that is Cruel and Unmerciful towards a *Man like himself*; how should he expect Forgiveness at the Hands of God! Our Lord has interwoven the Necessity of This Qualification, into the very *expression* of our daily Prayer. And by that most affectionate Parable, of the Servant who being forgiven ten thousand talents, refused to forgive his Fellow-servant one hundred pence; he has taught us upon what Conditions, we may expect that our *heavenly Father* will forgive Us.

Lastly;

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Lastly; PRAYERS must be offered SERM. XIX.
up, with *pure hands* and with a *clean*
Heart. That is to say; God will be
worshipped by those only, who sincerely
desire to *obey* him. The Prayers and Sa-
crifices, and all the external Devotions
that a wicked man is capable of per-
forming, are but so many mockeries and
provocations of God. *Prov. xxviii. 9;*
He that turneth away his ear from bear-
ing the Law, even his Prayer shall be A-
bomination. And This ends in the same
observation, wherewith I began upon this
Subject; and which is indeed the *first*,
and the *last* Truth, in the right Under-
standing of Religion; viz. that the Wor-
ship or Sacrifice most acceptable to God,
is the Obedience of a Virtuous and Reli-
gious Life.

THERE are several other Heads, un-
der which Prayer may be distinguished.
As, *private* Prayer; concerning which,
our Saviour gives large directions in the
with chapter of St *Matthew*. *Family-*
Prayer; concerning which may be un-
derstood That character of *Abraham*,
Gen. xviii. 19, I know him, that he will
command

SERM. command his children and his

XIX. after him, and they shall keep the
 ~~~~~ the Lord. And, Lastly, Publick

in the Assemblies of the Church,

publick acknowledgment of God

er and Glory, among men. Con

Each of which, there needs no E

ment; what has been said in the fo

Discourse concerning Prayer in

being easily applicable in every one

to each of these Heads in *particu*

*The End of VOL. IX*

